

4326. a

A
DISCOURSE
CONCERNING THE
NATURE AND DESIGN
OF THE
LORD'S SUPPER.

IN WHICH

The principal Things relating to this INSTITUTION
are briefly considered, and shewn to arise out of one
single Notion of it, viz.

As a Memorial of the Death of CHRIST.

By HENRY GROVE.

To which are added,

I. A DISCOURSE on the Obligations to communicate,
and an Answer to the usual Pleas for neglecting it.

II. DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES relating to the
LORD'S SUPPER.

G L A S G O W:
PRINTED BY ROBERT CHAPMAN AND
ALEXANDER DUNCAN.
M.DCC.LXXXIV.



A
D I S C O U R S E

CONCERNING THE

L O R D ' s S U P P E R .

THE Christian religion, contained in the scriptures of the New Testament, is so called, because it is the religion of Jesus Christ, which he taught partly in his own person while he was upon earth, and more fully by his apostles after his ascension into heaven; from whence he sent down his Holy Spirit upon them, to lead them into the knowledge of all truth; and, by the gifts of languages, and a power of working miracles, to enable them to propagate and establish it in all the earth. Among many things which shew the great excellency of this religion, not only above the false religions of the world, but even that of Moses himself, (though that also was from God,) we are to regard this as none of the least considerable, that it is a most reasonable and spiritual service; having but

two duties belonging to it that are of a positive nature; that is, such as might never have been duties, and would never have been so, without a particular and express command of God for them. And these are, baptism, and the Lord's supper. The outward action in both these is of itself indifferent, and obliges only by virtue of its being enjoined by one whose authority we have no room to dispute.

By baptism, they who had embraced the doctrine of salvation by Christ, took upon them the public profession of it, and were received into the number of his disciples; as all those in like manner are, to whom baptism is now administered. By communicating in the Lord's supper, we endeavour to keep alive in ourselves, and to preserve in the world, the memory of the divine author of that religion into which baptism first enters us. This is a plain account of these two gospel-ordinances, with regard to the first and most general design of each. The former hath a more immediate respect to the religion itself which we profess; the latter to the author of it, in remembrance of whom this institution of his is to be observed throughout all generations.

That men having sufficient evidence of the truth of the gospel, should readily believe

and entertain it; and believing it to be true, should openly profess it, is a dictate of natural reason; in other words, a moral duty. But the obligation they are under to declare and profess their faith by the particular ceremony of *baptizing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, doth not arise out of the nature of the ceremony itself, but is wholly to be resolved into the divine appointment. So again, that we should gratefully remember our benefactors, and that person, therefore, above all, who hath proved himself the greatest friend to mankind they ever had; is what reason, and all the principles of ingenuity, will not suffer us to be ignorant of. But for setting apart bread and wine to this use by solemn prayer, and then eating and drinking in memory of our blessed Lord, we have no other warrant but his express command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. However, there is this to be said for these two rites or ceremonies, that they have nothing burdensome and difficult in the practice of them, and will bear an easy and obvious application, as signs to the things signified and intended by them; which, no doubt, is one reason of their having been chosen by our Saviour for this purpose. I say one reason, not the only one; since be-

sides this, another inducement seems to have been, that he might not depart further than was necessary, from the received customs of the Jews; among whom, as frequent washings were a great part of their religion, so John his forerunner came baptizing with water, in token of that repentance by which they were prepared for the kingdom of heaven, or the gospel-dispensation, which was then at hand. And in eating the passover, it was their manner, having taken bread, to bless and break it, and to hallow or bless several cups of wine, one of which particularly was called *the cup of blessing*; which is the very name that is given by St. Paul to the cup in the Lord's supper*. But then our Saviour, adopting these rites into the worship of the Christian church, affixes another meaning and use to them, and prescribes a different form of words in the administration. In a word, man being a creature very much influenced by his senses, and so too apt to forget things spiritual and unseen, it seemed good to the divine wisdom so far to consult his weakness in this respect, as to adorn our holy religion with these two emblematical representations; which being but two, and admirably fitted to answer their end, have no

* 1 Cor. x. 16.

need of any thing further to be said in their vindication.

These ceremonial institutions are commonly called by the name of *sacraments*; which though it be no scripture-term, but borrowed from the language and customs of the Romans, is yet retained, and grown into universal use; because, as it originally signified the oath which soldiers took to be faithful to their general, it is properly enough transferred to denote the affectionate zeal and inviolable fidelity which the followers of Jesus, in baptism and the Lord's supper, profess and promise to the Captain of their salvation.

S E C T. I.

THESE sacraments are,

I. *A plain indication of man's being in a state of apostasy and distance from God.* The apparent meaning of these sacraments shews it. For what is baptism? *not the putting away the filth of the flesh*, but our becoming clean and pure in the sight of God. Christ is therefore said to 'have loved the church, and to have given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church,

‘not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,’ Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. The sanctification, or cleansing, is *by the word*, or doctrine of the gospel, accompanied with the operation of the divine Spirit; and only *with the washing of water*, or baptism, as the sign of this moral and inward cleansing. And who are they that have need of cleansing, but such as are defiled? Which shews, that till we are sanctified by the word of God, (which sanctification is set forth by outward baptism), we cannot please God. Again, what is the Lord’s supper, as to one principal part of its intention, but a commemoration of the atoning sacrifice made by Christ’s death on the behalf of mankind? And who but sinful rebellious creatures could need a sacrifice of reconciliation to be offered for them? So far, then, these ordinances have no very comfortable meaning. But,

2. *They are a welcome evidence, and no less plain, of man’s being in a recoverable state:* That though the condition of this sinful race of creatures be, without the grace and mercy of God, exceeding deplorable; yet, through this grace, it is not hopeless, but much otherwise; the ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s supper being on purpose insti-

tuted, in concurrence with the other means of grace, to bring us into, and build us up in a state of salvation by Jesus Christ: they are seals of the covenant of grace, which, out of the infinite mercifulness of his nature, and to shew his well pleasedness with the righteousness and obedience of his most beloved Son, the great Mediator, God hath graciously entered into with sinful men. And, here, let it be matter of joy to us, and thanksgiving to our merciful God, that when, through the sin of the first man Adam, and the weakness and disorders of human nature thereby occasioned, there was no more room for a covenant of innocence; the second man, who is the *Lord from heaven, brought in a new and better covenant*; better, whether we consider the terms of it, so admirably suited to our fallen state, or the grace and the glory promised. For this invaluable covenant we are indebted, under God, to the mediation of our compassionate Redeemer Jesus Christ. His death procured reconciliation with God; and the supper he bequeathed us, is a standing memorial of his death. And from hence it is I shall take my direction in explaining this sacrament.

The main and direct intention of the Lord's supper, is to be a perpetual commemoration,

or remembrance, of the death of Christ. This appears from those words of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 26. *As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.* So that we have no surer or easier method of settling a right and distinct notion of this ordinance, than to consider the death of Christ, here presented before our eyes, under those several views in which it is capable of being contemplated by us. The following are some of the principal.

S E C T. II.

I. **W**E may consider the death of Christ, as manifesting the thoughts which they had of him who put him to death, and the end designed by them in it. The Jews and Romans, by acting this scene of cruelty on the innocent Jesus, proclaimed to all the world, that they esteemed him a deceiver of the people; for had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*: and by exposing him as a public spectacle of infamy, pain, and sorrow, their hope was, they should have made all men ashamed or afraid to own him. Whereas (to see how little the devices of vain men avail against God's eternal coun-

* 1 Cor. ii. 8.

fel) his being *lifted up*, was the very way in which he was to draw all men unto him *.

And the sacrament of the supper was appointed with this design, that shewing forth the death of Christ therein, we might declare to the whole world our belief of him to be, that he was a teacher sent from God, his holy child *Jesus*, whom he hath anointed, notwithstanding that *Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together against him* †; and that we are not by fear or shame restrained from professing ourselves his disciples. The first notion, then, that offers itself to us of this sacrament, is its being a badge or mark of our Christian profession. We glory in that very person whom the Jews crucified, at the same time professing to receive him as our Lord and Master: nay, more, we profess to glory in him even as crucified.

1. We glory in that very person whom the Jews crucified, at the same time professing to receive him as our Lord and Master. We are ready to cry out with the Centurion, and those that were with him, when they saw the prodigies that attended his crucifixion, *Truly this is the Son of God* ‡. He is not so concealed under the vail of our flesh, or disfigured

* John xii. 32. † Acts iv. 27. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 54.

by his sufferings, but I can easily perceive the divine glory shining through, and acknowledge him for the greatest person that ever lived upon earth, *the Lord of glory, and my Lord*. This title he accepted when given him by his disciple: *Ye call me Master, and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am**. But then we likewise hear him in another place saying, *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*†? So that it is not the title by which I can hope to please my Saviour, without the subjection and obedience that is implied in it. I must not only say well, but do well. I am to remember, that all the precepts of the gospel, are the precepts of Christ, my Lord and Master; and that, consequently, if I obey not the gospel, I am *in works* guilty of *denying the Lord that bought me*, and act a part too much like that of the *soldiers*, who, having *platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and put a reed in his right-hand, bowed the knee to him in mockery, and hailed him king*‡. Would I not have all that know me take notice, that I own myself the disciple of the crucified Jesus? But how? Not, it is to be hoped, by this single action only of eating and drinking in obedience to his command, and in honour

* John xiii. 13. † Luke vi. 46. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 29.

of his memory; alas, this alone will signify very little: but by all the actions of my life! My whole behaviour should bespeak me a Christian, a servant and a follower of Jesus. And if I really think him that excellent and divine person I profess to believe him, this one consideration should be enough, not barely to reconcile me to my duty, but to make me in love with it; since I profess to believe him a person of the highest dignity; that he came down from heaven, in order to teach us *the most excellent way*; and that the scope and design of all he taught and commanded is, to make us *holy as he is holy*, that we may be fitted to live with him and his holy angels in the presence of God for ever.

2. We not only profess ourselves the disciples of one that was crucified, but also to glory in him as crucified. We think this no reproach to our blessed Lord, that he was treated in so ignominious a manner by a blind and ungrateful world! or to our religion, that the author of it was slain, and hanged on a tree; or to ourselves, that we are the followers of one whom the main body of the Jews rejected: but, on the contrary, a very great honour to us, to our religion, and to our divine Master. We are not ashamed to say, *Lo, this is he*, the Lord our Redeemer, *we have waited*

for him, and he will save us! Let the prejudiced Jews express their abhorrence of him, and, with a mixture of scorn and hatred, call him *the man that was hanged**; let them say that it cannot so much as enter into their thoughts, that the Messiah should be crucified, and punished with a death which the law pronounces accursed: I joyfully take the opportunity which the commemoration of his death, in the way that he himself hath commanded, gives me, to avow my faith and trust in him, glorying in nothing more than in *Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God†*. Had he whom we Christians call and account the *Messiah*, been cut off for himself, had he deserved the death which he suffered, his name would never have spread, as it hath done to the ends of the earth, and his cause have subsisted to this day; as, we make no doubt, it will to the period of all time. Pilate himself could observe that it was only *for envy that the chief priests and elders had delivered Jesus to him†*. And the envy they betrayed on this occasion was at once their great

* As Trypho the Jew does in Justin Martyr. † 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 18.

fin, and a sort of homage and acknowledgment paid by them to our Saviour's superior virtues, which offended them for much the same reason as the light of the sun does sore eyes.

" Yes, O my Jesus, it was only because the
" world was not worthy of thee, that thou
" metst with no better usage from the world.
" The world would have loved its own; but
" because thou and thy kingdom were not of
" this world, therefore the world hated thee,
" as thou both in thy life and death shewedst
" thy contempt of the world! And shall I
" esteem and admire thee ever the less for
" this? No; but the more. When I con-
" sider the noble fruits that spring from that
" cursed tree on which the Son of God ex-
" pired, and that under the banner of the
" cross all nations have been brought to the
" obedience of the faith, I think with my-
" self, what can be more glorious, either for
" our Master, for us his disciples, or for the
" gospel which we have received from him,
" than that by such unlikely means he hath
" triumphed over all the powers of earth and
" hell; and made it a more honourable thing
" for his followers to despise worldly pomp
" and riches, than to enjoy them; esteem-
" ing them as mere trifles in comparison of
" the true riches, and the invisible glories of

“ the heavenly world! Am I one of those
“ that *glory in the cross of Christ*? O let me
“ take care that I be not found in that num-
“ ber whom the Apostle Paul pronounces *e-*
“ *nemies to our Saviour's cross*! * Every one
is an enemy to the cross of Christ, that is not
an enemy to those sins and vices from which
Christ died to redeem us; he shews himself
an enemy in opposing the use that ought to
be made of the doctrine of the cross, and, as
much as in him lies, the progress of that doc-
trine. Did all the followers of Jesus behave
no better than some of them do, how soon
would the honours of the cross cease, and the
religion of him that was crucified be blotted
out from the earth? And had all that named
the name of Christ in the beginning, approved
themselves no better friends to him, Chri-
stianity, humanly speaking, had been stifled
in its birth; and the whole world, judging of
the Master by the disciples, would have con-
cluded that he did not suffer unjustly. With
the greatest reason, therefore, doth the Apo-
stle say of those who trample on the rules of
Christianity, that they are *enemies to the cross*
of Christ; they are the persons that most of
all hinder the triumphs of the cross, and, of

* Phil. iii. 18.

all men, they have least cause to make their boast in it.

Let me, before I close this head, address myself to such as turn their backs on the Lord's table, and beseech them seriously to ask themselves a few plain questions. How can I number myself among the followers of Christ, and yet will not be persuaded to join with them in an action, whereby the Christian society is distinguished from all others? Must not my Christianity, as to the external part of it, be imperfect, if I am contented to want one principal sign of a Christian? Or what should I be able to say for myself, should Christ not own me for his, upon my appearing before him without this mark of a disciple, a sincere love to all the institutions of my blessed Master? Certainly, if it should be found, that my neglecting the Lord's supper proceeded from a want of real love and respect to my Saviour and his commands, nothing will be sufficient to excuse it. Baptism puts my name on the roll of his followers; but my baptismal dedication, if in infancy, being not properly my own act, it is in a manner necessary that I should make it mine, by recognizing it now that I am grown up to years of understanding. And how is the obligation of one sacrament to be acknowledged

and renewed any way so well, as by putting myself under the bond of the other? Besides that baptism hath not so immediate and visible a regard to Christ crucified as the Lord's supper; on which therefore we should set the highest value, to let the world see that we think not this article of our faith any shame to us, or discredit to our religion; but a very great honour and advantage to both.

S E C T. III.

II. **W**E may consider the death of Christ as that of a martyr, or witness; a martyr to the truth of his own doctrine, the first and the noblest. His death was entirely voluntary. No man (saith he) taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself*. As they could not have taken it from him without his consent; so without his consent, (could we suppose this), whatever he had suffered, though the consequence of what he taught, would not have procured him the name of a martyr; for he is not a martyr, who, having brought himself into the snare by some doctrine which he hath advanced and propagated, would be glad to get out of it again upon any terms, even though it were

* John x. 18.

the abjuring as false all that he had taught for true: but he that dares say the same, in the face of the most threatening dangers, that he had said before; and chuses rather to die for the truth, than to deny and forsake it. This all will allow to be a real martyr. And such a martyr was Jesus Christ. When, upon his trial, *the high priest adjured him by the living God, to tell him, whether he was the Christ the Son of God**; though silent before to all that the false witnesses had alledged against him, and not to be provoked to plead in his own defence, which he could easily have done, in such a manner, as to make those who had the bitterest hatred to the truth, yield to the force of it; he immediately answers, *Thou hast said; or, I am that very person.* Pilate, the Heathen governor, and his judge, asks him a like question, *Art thou a king then?* To which hereplies, *Thou sayest that I am a king; or, What thou hast now said, being taken out of the form of a question†, is very true.* Thy words are, Βασιλεὺς εἰ σύ, *Thou art a king;* and I am free to say that I am so. *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth‡.* This

* Matth. xxvi. 23. † His answer to the question of the high priest, may be accounted for in the same manner.
‡ John xviii. 37.

is that *good confession* which St. Paul saith he *witnessed before Pontius Pilate*, recommending it to his son Timothy for his imitation *. Here are two known characters of the Messiah: for in the question of the high priest, *Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?* *Christ* (or *Messiah*) and *Son of God*, seem to be used as equivalent expressions; which we may suppose to be the reason that in St. Luke's relation of the same thing, it is only, *Art thou the Christ* †? And that the Messiah was to be a King, the Jews to this day agree with us, as widely as we differ in explaining the nature of his kingdom. Our Saviour, for wise reasons, had not openly and directly assumed the name and titles of the Messiah till now; but now that he was summoned by the magistrate to give witness to the truth, and no ill use could be made by the people of his owning himself to be a King, (when his death would convince them that his kingdom was not from hence, of a worldly and temporal kind, as he then told them), he no longer seeks concealment, but owns himself to be Messiah the King, and the Son of God, though he was not ignorant that his so doing could have no other effect than to hasten his condemnation.

This our Saviour's constancy to the death,

* 1 Tim. vi. 13.

† Luke xxii. 67.

which he bore with so much meekness towards his enemies, and confidence in God; neither of which perhaps was ever known in a deceiver in that dreadful hour, though they might be in one deceived: this, I say, added to the miracles he had wrought, and the exemplary holiness and goodness of his life, should make us think, when we are meditating on his death in this view of it, of the mighty confirmation which our faith, in the divinity of our religion, derives from hence. Would an impostor, if it were possible for such a one to put on the appearance of the most unaffected sanctity, and of all other virtues, have been able to maintain it to the very last, and in defence of a known falsehood? It cannot be. And therefore, when we see Jesus Christ exemplifying his divine doctrine in his life, (of which more presently), and sealing it with his blood, we may very well conclude, that for certain *all things that John spake of this man, or this man of himself, or his apostles concerning him, are true* *.

But the use we are more immediately concerned to make of this view of our Saviour's death as of a martyr, is to reflect on the reasonableness of his demands, that we should sacrifice every thing for the truth's sake, not excepting life itself;

* John x. 41.

which we must *bate*, acting after much the same manner as if we did so, or we *cannot be his disciples* *. In all this he requires no more of us than he practised himself; which should put us in mind of the disposition with which we should celebrate the memory of this glorious martyr; and bring us to resolve, with a humble reliance on heavenly aid, *Though I die for thee, yet will I not deny thee; though all men should be offended in thee, yet will I not be offended.* That God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, knows, without putting it to the trial, whether we should adhere thus firmly to the cause of truth; and where he sees a preparation of mind and heart, will reward it; though not perhaps with the same crown as that of actual martyrs, yet with a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

S E C T. IV.

III. **W**E may consider the death of *Christ* as that of our example. Generally they that are put to death by the public magistrate, are set forth as examples in another sense, *viz.* to warn and deter others from doing like them. But here is one, who,

* Luke xiv. 26.

though treated under a form of justice as the worst of malefactors, is yet proposed to us as an example of all virtue and goodness; of virtue calumniated, oppressed, and persecuted, yet still the same. So we are told, that *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps* *. In our blessed Lord we have an example of the greatest disinterestedness, the most ardent zeal and concern for the good of mankind, the most wonderful humility and condescension that ever was, and a resignation and obedience to God without bounds; all which we are called upon to imitate in those words of the Apostle Paul to the Philippians: *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross* †. Could humiliation, submission, and obedience, be carried further than this? *Not my will, but thine be done* ‡. *I come to do thy will* §; to do it, by yielding myself to suffer it. This was

* 1 Pet. ii. 21. † Phil. ii. 5,—8. ‡ Luke xxii. 42.
§ Heb. x. 7.

the language of the blessed Jesus; and as he spoke, so he acted. The command to *love our enemies*, to *forgive them that injure us*, and to *pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us*, hath been reckoned a hard saying, an objection against Christianity never to be answered. But by whom is this esteemed so unreasonable? One would think only by such as have not read, or do not believe, or at best do not consider the history of our Saviour's passion. Other answers might be returned; but, waving them, let us leave his example, particularly when he was on the cross, to silence this objection against his precepts:—*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do**: the best excuse that could possibly be made in their favour; and accompanied with a prayer, which, from such a person, and in such circumstances, did not, and could not fail of success. What filial trust did he exercise in God at a time when the whole world was turned against him, and God himself had withdrawn the usual manifestations of his presence! *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me*†? He still calls him his God, not quitting his hold of him; and breathes out his holy soul into the bosom of his love, *Father, into thy hands I commend*

* Luke xxiii. 34. † Matth. xxvii. 46.

my spirit *. So should we learn to maintain a humble hope in God, when the scene of providence looks most dark and melancholy; and be so far from judging of our interest in the divine favour by outward events, as not to conclude any thing against ourselves, merely from the want of those sensible refreshments and exultations of spirit which we may have sometimes experienced. What good people call *spiritual desertion*, is many times nothing more than a depression and sadness of mind; an interruption, not in the life and activity of their graces, but in the comforts afforded by them: somewhat of the same kind with that eclipse which our Saviour suffered in his last hours, but vastly short of it in degree.

We should, moreover, regard Christ's dying behaviour, as finishing the example of his life. Were we only to judge of him by his death, we might from thence form a pretty certain conjecture of what his life had been, as from the manner of his life nothing else could be expected but such a death; a death by which he glorified God, and instructed and edified mankind. We see one and the same inward principle of love to that which is good exerting itself with a most vigorous influence, and perfect uniformity, in all he did, and all

* Luke xxiii. 46.

he suffered. He had long before invited the world to learn of him meekness and lowliness of mind; and all the difference in this respect between the close of his life, and the rest of it, was, that his sufferings being then more grievous, he had an opportunity to shew these virtues in a fairer light than they had ever appeared in before. He had always gone up and down doing good; and as his life, so his death, was directed to the benefit of mankind. The spirit of piety and devotion that animated him was remarkable; his soul was always on the wing; and what time he could borrow from the offices of friendship, and kindness, and instruction towards men, he spent in prayer to God: and the support he had from hence, and the great advantage it was of to him in the last and darkest scene of his life, is as easily conceivable: *Father, the hour is come.——I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was**. The holy life which he had led, and the glory that was to follow, brightened the gloomy path which his soul then trod. How he stood affected to the world and all its enjoyments, he had

* John xvii. 1, 4, 5.

shewn all along before: *Being rich, for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich**; and not think the happiness of life to consist in the abundance of the things which a man possesses, or that this world is the proper abode of felicity: and he ended a poor and mean, but not inglorious life, with a painful and shameful death; that we by him may be taught how to get above the love of the one, and the fear of the other. He pleased not himself; was not guilty of sensual indulgencies; did not form his conduct upon fancy, or custom, or passion; preferred heaven, from whence he came, to earth, whither he descended only on a visit of compassion; behaved gravely, usefully, and holily; and, like the setting sun, appeared greatest at the end of his course.

“ O Jesus, I now see what I have to do
“ when I shew forth thy death in thy supper!
“ I am to contemplate the heavenly virtues
“ and graces that then shone forth in thee,
“ after having been exhibited in the whole
“ course of thy life, and to excite and oblige
“ myself to imitate them. I am determined
“ to follow thee, though it be at a long distance
“ between; and shall make it my ambition
“ to resemble thee in every part of my

* 2 Cor. viii. 9.

“behaviour, whether towards God, towards
 “men, or with regard to myself. Was it
 “usual in the primitive church, when they
 “commemorated the deaths of the martyrs,
 “to recite their laudable actions, and worthy
 “qualities? I will be thankful for their ex-
 “amples, and those of all other good men;
 “and be followers of them as far forth as
 “they were so of my Saviour, but no fur-
 “ther. Thy example, O most holy Jesus,
 “is that which I intend to have continually
 “before me; and while I behold thy body
 “hanging on the cross, I will endeavour to
 “copy and describe the amiable virtues of thy
 “soul upon my own! My aim shall be to be
 “*crucified to the world* by thy cross, and to
 “have *the world crucified to me* *; to be zea-
 “lously affected in that which is good, and
 “meekly patient under affliction and trouble;
 “to be actuated by the same spirit, and to
 “live and die like thee.”

S E C T. V.

IV. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered as
 a demonstration of the most astonishing
 love that ever was, both of the Father and of

* Gal. vi. 14.

*the Son; of the Father, in giving his Son to die for us; and of the Son of God, who so freely offered himself.——God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life†. And whereas it is the observation of our Lord, that greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend‡. God hath herein commended his love to us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; that we who had been enemies, might be reconciled to God by the death of his Son§. We see the greatness of this love in the greatness or dignity of the person suffering, and his nearness to God, being his only begotten Son, who lay in the bosom of the Father||: in the greatness of the sufferings voluntarily submitted to by him; he suffered death, even the shameful and painful death of the cross: in the great unworthiness of the persons to whom this extraordinary favour was shewn; sinners, and enemies to God by sin; and, finally, in the surpassing greatness of the benefits thence resulting, all of them issuing into, and as it were summed up in that now mentioned, *eternal life*. Christ's willingness to die for the advantage we should receive from*

† John iii. 16. ‡ John xv. 12. § Rom. v. 8,—10.
|| John i. 18.

his dying testimony to the truth of his religion, and his most instructive and affecting example, must be thankfully owned as a proof of his love. But the greatest proofs of that love are yet behind.

To perpetuate the memory of his dying love, our blessed Saviour instituted his supper, to be observed till his second coming, commanding his disciples to do it in remembrance of him. For which reason it may seem unaccountable, that there should be any so mistaken, as to deny this sacrament; or so ungrateful, as to allow themselves, without any manner of uneasiness, in the neglect of it; which I fear is done by a great many who own the institution. The Apostles and first Christians religiously kept this ordinance, and much oftener than we do now, though they had the death of Christ fresh in their memories, and so could not be supposed to need a sensible representation of it, and of his love manifested therein, so much as we, who live at so remote a distance from the time and place of our Saviour's death. Did not Christ die for us as well as for them? And if so, are we not equally obliged to celebrate his love in dying for us? Was not this supper instituted for our sake as much as for theirs? and, in one respect, more, as we are now in greater danger of forgetting

our benefactor; because it is now longer since that he lived upon earth, and died to procure the benefits of redemption for us? And ought we not thankfully to observe an institution which doth so mightily assist our faith and gratitude; an institution which the primitive Christians observed as much oftener than we, as upon the account now mentioned they needed it less? Such a friend and lover of souls as Christ hath shewn himself, deserves never to be forgotten; and, doubtless, never will as long as there is a church upon earth, purchased with his blood, founded by his preaching, and preserved by his providence. But then we have reason to believe, that it is by this ordinance, which, like a pillar, bears his name inscribed upon it, that a lively memory of him is kept up in the church. The unparalleled love of Jesus should be our daily meditation; but we must not think that this excludes the advantage, and even necessity of an ordinance, in which it is remembered after a more open and solemn manner. The worship of God is to be performed every day, in the closet, and in the family; notwithstanding which, God saw it requisite to set apart one day in seven for the more august and public performance of his worship. And that there is any such thing as true religion in the world,

we may reckon, in great measure, owing to the observation of the Lord's day; as it is to be attributed to the Lord's supper, that the memory of Christ's love spreads and flourishes in his church. And I am ready to think, that they who cannot be prevailed on to commemorate the love of Christ at his table, are not the persons who stand in least need of this assistance. This then is another notion which we are to form of the Lord's supper; it is *the means appointed to eternize the memory of Christ's dying love, and of the love of God declared by the same event.* And, oh, let not the remembrance of his death ever die! but let our love, inflamed and strengthened by this holy ordinance, keep alive the memory of his. We merit to be eternally forgotten of God, if we can forget our Redeemer.

But why is Christ so desirous that his love should be had in everlasting remembrance? Is it only that it may be the subject of a barren admiration? or merely for the sake of our praises, and that he may have a name upon earth? Alas, these are low ends for the Son of God to propose; who, being the wonder of angels, and the delightful theme of their songs, needs not, surely, covet the applauses of such poor, ignorant, and sinful mortals as we are! No; we must carry our

thoughts further. The *love of God*, and our neighbour, are the *two commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets*; and both these have a new life and strength derived into them from the love of God, and of Jesus, represented in the sacrament of the supper. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us* *; but then for this very reason we are to love him the more, that he *first loved us* †. Next to God, who is love, we are to love his Son, who hath loved us, and given himself for us. And because God hath so loved us, *we ought also to love one another* ‡: for this is *the commandment of God, that he who loveth God, love his brother also* §. And the same is Christ's *new commandment* to his disciples. We have all a better title to one another's love, than any of us can pretend to have had to the love of God; and shall prove ourselves doubly unworthy of this love, if we refuse to make so easy and so reasonable a return for it as this of brotherly affection. It is an additional motive to universal love, that we are all comprehended and embraced in the arms of divine love. And how is our love to discover itself? Why, if occasion be, in *laying down our lives for the brethren* ||: and surely,

* 1 John iv. 10. † 1 John iv. 19. ‡ John xiii. 34.
§ 1 John iv. 21. || 1 John iii. 16.

then, much more in a readiness to bear their burdens, to relieve their necessities, and to discharge all the other offices of kindness and good-will to them; since no one who is in a disposition of mind to give the greatest instance of love, can be backward to do that which is much less. “Thy love, O my Saviour, constraineth me to all this; because I thus judge, that thou diedst for me, that I should not live to myself, but to thee! And what am I to understand by living to thee, but doing those things which will be most acceptable to thee, and most serviceable to the cause of religion; that is, the cause of Jesus in the world? What but my being just, and charitable, and holy; and, in a word, behaving so, that the world may receive some of those advantages, and in a lesser degree, from me, and others of the same spirit with me, as they would in greater number and much higher degree, reap from thy presence and company if thou thyself wert upon earth; and so thy Spirit breathing and acting in us, and shedding its benign influences upon all around us, may in some measure supply thy personal absence?”

S E C T. VI.

V. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered as that of a sacrifice, by which the displeasure of God was atoned, and the sin of man expiated. We may here say, as our Lord's forerunner, when he pointed him out to the Jews, *Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world**! Once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself†. He bore our sins in his own body on the tree‡. Now, Christ's death having thus the nature of a public sacrifice, we may regard the supper he was pleased to institute, as a commemorative representation of this sacrifice, and as a feast upon it.

I. The Lord's supper is a commemorative representation of the sacrifice which our Redeemer made of himself on the cross. This is the language of the institution itself. From that we learn, that *the bread we eat*, is (representatively) *the body of Christ that was given for us*; and *the cup we drink of*, is (in the same sense) *the blood of Christ which was shed for us*§. The death of Christ was a true propitiatory sacrifice, and as such, is commemorated in the sacrament of the sup-

* John i. 29.

† Heb. ix. 26.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

§ Luke xxii. 19, 20.

per. But the Lord's supper is not, and indeed cannot be, itself such a sacrifice as the Papists affirm; because it is a commemorative sign of it; and common sense will teach us, that the sign and the thing signified by it, cannot be the same. However, as was just now observed, it is a representation of that sacrifice; very faint indeed, but not insignificant: and every time the believer takes the consecrated elements, he doth, as it were, lay his hands upon the sacrifice represented by them, and plead with God in virtue of it, for pardon and acceptance; hereby uniting his prayers, and all that he does in the service of God, to the intercession of the *great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens*. The third and the ninth hours among the Jews, (their three answering to our nine o'clock in the morning, and their nine to our three in the afternoon), were called *hours of prayers*; because these were the times of the daily sacrifice, and the burning of incense; when the people chose to offer their prayers, that they might accompany the sacrifices in the temple, and become more acceptable in conjunction with them. Thus, in all our approaches to the throne of divine grace, whether in public or private, on the day of sacred rest, or at any other time, we should be

mindful of the sacrifice of the cross, and the intercession of our High Priest, founded upon it, in *the holy of holies* above; and *having an altar whereof they had no right to eat, who served the tabernacle, should by him, who was our sacrifice, and is still our High Priest, offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name* *. But though the sacrifice of Christ be a main ground of our hope, and what, being sinful creatures, we are concerned chiefly to have respect to in all our religious performances; yet, when we behold this sacrifice represented in the actions performed at the Lord's table, we seem to have a kind of signal given us to apply by faith to this sacrifice, and a more than ordinary advantage and opportunity for the exercise of our faith in it. History gives us an account of an Egyptian nobleman, who, out of his great affection to the memory of his son, had an image of him placed in the house; to which the servants, having committed a fault, would flee for protection, finding it their best refuge from the anger of their lord. Here we, who have grievously offended God, take refuge by faith in Christ himself, his once dead, but now ever-living Son. In the lively exercises

* Heb. xiii. 10,—15.

of which faith we are very much assisted by the representation of our Saviour's sufferings exhibited to us in his supper. "I have sinned, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; but see here what thy beloved Son hath suffered for my sins! Let thy justice behold this sacrifice, and, after that sight hath disarmed it, let it then strike!"

There are two things more especially which we are taught by the representation of Christ's sacrifice in the sacramental supper, viz. the great evil of sin, and God's readiness to pardon it, which we are to consider as an argument of his great goodness. We see the evil of sin in the sufferings of other men, and feel it in our own. But not all the infelicities of human life, nor death reigning from Adam to the last generation of men that shall be upon earth, can afford that convincing, that affecting evidence of the evil of sin, as the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Must he, that excellent person, styled *the Son of God*, to denote his dignity; and *the Lamb of God*, to signify his innocence, die to expiate the guilt of sin? and how great then must that guilt be which needed such an expiation! And why am I, from the dolorous passion of my Saviour, to take occasion to reflect on the evil of sin, but that I may be

excited to hate it more than ever, and to resolve and watch against it? This, I am sensible, is the end designed; and I do now therefore renounce all league and friendship with sin, and, both out of hatred to that, and love to my Saviour, intend to pursue it to its utter and final destruction. And great is the encouragement I have to do so; since, in the ordinance before me, I have a sort of ocular demonstration, that God is ready to forgive all sin; which shews that he is as good, as sin is evil. Christ died as a sacrifice; and if this sacrifice was not accepted, wherefore is this perpetual memorial of it? If insufficient, why is there not a repetition of the sacrifice itself, but only of the representation of it? Without controversy, God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and is actually reconciled to all that repent. The hope of forgiveness is essential to the religion of fallen creatures, and one of the first and most active principles of it; and where this hope is raised into assurance, as it is by the sacrifice of Christ, which we here commemorate, may it not be expected to be the spring of the most chearful, most constant, and universal obedience? I can no more think, that God will reject my sincere and faithful service of him, though attended with

many sinful failings and defects, than that he will accept me and be pleased with me, if I continue in the habitual practice of any sin. His pardoning and receiving those that forsake their sins, and punishing, the more severely, such as will not be persuaded to do it, are equally plain from the instance of God's love to sinners, and hatred of sin. The death of Christ renders sin more pardonable, but not less hateful, rather abundantly more so. I will therefore hope in the mercy of God, because Christ died: but, for that very reason that he died, I will not presume upon it; for if so much was done to *the green tree*, (to him that was righteous and innocent, and so like green wood not fit fuel for the fire), *what shall be done to the dry* *; to those who, by impenitency in a sinful course, render themselves vessels of *wrath fitted for destruction*, as much fitted for it as dry wood is to burn?

2. *The Lord's supper is a feast upon a sacrifice.* It is called *a feast*, in allusion to the Jewish passover; for *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us* †: and as the Jews feasted upon their paschal lamb, after it had been first presented to God, so do we, sacramentally, and by faith, upon ours. This confi-

* Luke xxiii. 31.

† 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

deration of it will suggest several things of great use and importance to our thoughts.

1st, As a feast it is very expressive of the communion of saints. Eating and drinking together was ever counted a mark of friendship, and a likely way of establishing the union; especially if a feast was added to this very end: for, as one observes, this amounted to a mutual promise of the parties concerned, to live in peace and unity among themselves*. By how many endearing ties doth Christ preserve the unity of his body the church! and yet all little enough to keep the members of it fast knit to one another. Of all the external bands of Christian love, there is none of that efficacy as the holy communion: wherefore it is recorded of the primitive disciples, that *they continued stedfastly in the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul*†. If they that are of the same family, and eat at the same table, cannot agree, they must be of a very unhappy temper indeed. *We being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread*‡. Now if they, who joining in the same sacraments, and

* Vid. Gen. xxvi. 28,—30.

† Acts ii. 42. iv. 32.

‡ 1 Cor. x. 17.

receiving the same Spirit, are incorporated into one mystical body, and united to one head, are not able to maintain a tolerable harmony among themselves, let us never wonder that others differ. Should not their care be at all times, and by all means, *to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace**? Is not this the lesson we learn from our Lord's instituting his supper, and one thing which we promise when we meet at his table? Let Christians reflect on the agreement among persons confederated in any wicked design; and blush to think, that common guilt should do more to hold such men together, than the same common privileges and common hopes to prevent dissensions among them. And, were this a proper place for it, we might further remark it, as matter of the greatest lamentation of all, that the sacrament of the supper, which should be the center of union to the Christian world, instead of always answering that end, hath too often been one of the chief engines to divide men into parties, and the principal means to sharpen and halloo the zeal of one party against another. We need not go so far back, as the animosities among some foreign Protestants in the beginning of the reformation: I fear

* Eph. iv. 3.

we have too many instances nearer home. Is it that this sacrament hath of itself this tendency? or because men cannot be contented to let others enjoy the ordinances of the gospel in that simplicity in which Christ left them to his immediate followers, nor on the same terms of communion as were then thought sufficient? Be that as it may, the duty of all communicants lies plain. Does a person *love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity* *? It is certain he belongs to the communion of saints, whether he be of the particular communion that I am a member of, or of some other; though it should be of one from which I am excluded, because not able to comply, without offending my conscience, with the conditions required. In this case, I am not presently to shut him out from a share in my affections, but to account him as a brother whether he will call me by that name or no: and when I think, that all good Christians are of the same family, and united to the same head, how distant soever in place, or perhaps in opinion, I am to stretch my heart as wide as possibly I can, that I may take them in all; remembering, that the same heaven will receive us at last, though the same place, through necessity, or from

* Eph. vi. 24.

some unhappy mistake, cannot hold us upon earth.

2dly, The Lord's supper being a feast on a sacrifice, we have a *fellowship* therein *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. The tabernacle, or temple, under the law, was the house of God, the altar his table? and the sacrifices brought to be offered there were no longer the offerer's, but the provisions of God's house, and are therefore called *the bread* (or food) *of God**; so that when the offerer was permitted to partake of his own sacrifice, he was not to consider it as his own but as God's, and to look upon himself as God's guest. And is not every Christian church the Lord's house, though not in exactly the same sense as the temple was so? Is not the communion-table called *the table of the Lord*? and what is provided, *the Lord's supper*? and the sacramental cup, in particular, *the cup of the Lord*†? “Think, “therefore, O my soul, of the honour to “which thou art raised, that the Lord Jesus Christ is master of the feast, and that “God himself vouchsafes his presence, and “bids every worthy receiver welcome to the “entertainments of his house! This is some- “thing more than to be a guest at the table

* Levit. xxi. 6. † I Cor. x. 21. xi. 20.

“ of the greatest person upon earth; for
 “ here thou art the guest of God, as truly
 “ so, though not entertained with the same
 “ magnificence, as those whom he hath ad-
 “ vanced to dwell in his heavenly palace.”
 The Apostle Paul takes notice, that they who
 partook of the sacrifice offered to idols, or dæ-
 mons, had fellowship with those dæmons;
 and were thereby disqualified from having
 fellowship with Christ, by drinking of his
 cup, and partaking of his table*. It will
 not be amiss if we sometimes consider, that
 our forefathers being idolatrous Gentiles,
 were among those who were in friendship
 with false gods, and strangers to the true;
 while we, their descendents, *are brought nigh*
by the blood of Christ†, much nearer than
 our Heathen ancestors; nay nearer than God’s
 peculiar people themselves under the law:
 for, agreeably to the superior excellency of
 our sacrifice, is our greater freedom of access
 to God; who having bestowed on us the ad-
 option of sons, hath *sent forth the Spirit of his*
Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father‡;
 not *the spirit of bondage*, but *the spirit of adop-*
tion§: to encourage which filial spirit, and
 humble boldness towards God, the whole

* 1 Cor. x. 20, 21. † Eph. ii. 13. ‡ Gal. iv. 6.
 § Rom. viii. 15.

frame of the gospel-dispensation is visibly fitted, and particularly the ordinance of the supper. We are now treated more as children, and are, emphatically speaking, ‘ a people ‘ near unto the Lord.’

Now, since such is the nature of this ordinance, that ‘ the bread which we break, is the ‘ communion of the body of Christ; and the cup ‘ of blessing which we bless, is the communion ‘ of the blood of Christ *;’ what manner of persons ought Christian communicants to be, in all purity of heart, and holiness of conversation, who are received into this intimate converse with the holy God, and with his Son Jesus Christ, the image of his holiness? ‘ What ‘ communion hath light with darkness†? If ‘ we say that we have fellowship with him, and ‘ walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth: ‘ but if we walk in the light, as he is in the ‘ light, we have fellowship one with another; ‘ and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin ‡.’ We are, doubtless, at best unworthy of this communion with God, and not so well qualified for it as were to be desired. And hereupon we might be ready to question our being privileged with so near an approach to him, but that he hath put it out of all doubt by condescending to

* 1 Cor. x. 16. † 2 Cor. vi. 14. ‡ 1 John i. 6, 7.

our weakness, and in a manner appealing to our very senses, in order to convince us of his entire readiness to receive us, worthless as we are, and, unfit as we are for his society, to dwell with us. He that inviteth us to his table, will not deny us his presence and converse there. Let us acknowledge our unpreparedness for communion with God, and the backwardness of our bad hearts to it: but let us not doubt of God's willingness to have communion with us, provided only that we come not in our moral uncleanness or pollution. For we are never to forget this, that *without holiness* we can no more be really *nigh to God* in this world than we can *see his face* in the next: and it would be very strange, if any should be so exceeding foolish, as to think of putting the blood of Christ itself, and the sacrament of his supper, in the room of this holiness, when both these do so clearly insinuate the absolute necessity of it.

3dly, The Lord's supper being a feast upon a sacrifice, there seems to be sufficient ground for our considering it as a solemn form of our renewing our covenant with God, and a means and sign of our participating in the blessings of the covenant. The book of the law, containing the promises of God to the

people of Israel, and the terms upon which these promises would be fulfilled to them, is therefore called *the book of the covenant*: and because, when this book was read in the audience of the people, who promised that all that the Lord had said they would do, and be obedient, there were beasts offered in sacrifice, with the blood of which Moses sprinkled the people, to denote the solemn ratification of God's covenant with them; this blood, therefore, hath the name given it of *the blood of the covenant* *. In like manner, the gospel being God's new covenant with all such as believe in Jesus Christ; as the New Testament, in which the gospel is recorded, may very properly be styled *the book of the covenant*; so the blood of Christ, by which this covenant was confirmed, is expressly called *the blood of the covenant* †. The covenant of grace hath an essential respect to the sacrifice of the cross, as the foundation upon which it rests; and forasmuch as in the Lord's supper we both sacramentally and spiritually partake of this sacrifice, it does very naturally suggest the thought of renewing, by and through this worthy sacrifice, our covenant with God, and the dedication of ourselves and all that we have to him. In the 50th Psalm we have an

* Exod. xxiv. 7, 8.

† Heb. x. 29.

edict from the King of heaven, published in the following form of words: *Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.* This is spoken of God's ancient people, who entered into covenant with him at the very time that the sacrifice was killed and offered. Whereas here, the sacrifice is first offered, and offered once for all, and then, with an eye to this sacrifice, we covenant with God, one person after another, and one generation after another; either singly, as in baptism; or a whole society together, as in the Lord's supper. The first time of our approaching the Lord's table may, upon some accounts, be the most awful, as we then first of all communicate in the memorials of our Saviour's body and blood, and by these sacred symbols confirm and solemnize our dedication to God; but then we renew this dedication, or covenant, every time we receive the holy communion. It is true, when Christ says, 'This cup is the new testament (or covenant) in my blood *,' the direct meaning seems to be no more than this, that the sacramental wine is a figure or memorial of the blood of Christ, by which the new covenant was established. However, because in the Lord's supper we do sa-

* Luke xxii. 20.

cramentally eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, we may therefore be allowed to look on this ordinance as a form of covenanting between God and us, and a seal of the covenant both on his part and ours. When Abraham is said to 'have received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith†, what are we to understand by this metaphor of *a seal*, but the assurance which God gave Abraham, by this external sign, of the acceptableness of his faith, for the sake of which he was pleased to establish his covenant with him? The metaphor is borrowed from a well-known custom, of making things firm and certain by setting a seal to them. And why may not the Lord's supper be, for much the same reason, esteemed a seal of God's covenant with us, being a visible sign or token of his covenant-favour towards us? The soul, by faith, may hear God speaking to it after some such manner as this. "Come hither, O thou whom I
"love! I do here promise upon the body
"and blood of my Son to be thy God, and
"to do for thee all that can be expected from
"that title; and let this body and blood be
"witness between me and thee, for the per-
"formance of my promise."—"With all pos-

† Rom. iv. 11.

“ fible humility and grateful joy (replies the
“ foul) do I accept thy offer, O moſt merci-
“ ful God; and on the ſame ſacred pledges I
“ promiſe to be thine. Taking thee, O Fa-
“ ther almighty, for my God and Father,
“ my ſovereign owner and everlaſting por-
“ tion! thee, O Son of God, for my all-
“ ſufficient Redeemer and only Advocate;
“ and putting myſelf into the hands and
“ under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, as
“ my Sanctifier and guide, my helper and
“ comforter, I preſent myſelf a living ſacri-
“ fice, holy, acceptable to God, which is my
“ reaſonable ſervice! I take the precepts of
“ the goſpel for the rule of all my actions,
“ and rely upon the promiſes of it as the
“ immoveable foundation of my hopes. I
“ reſign myſelf to thy diſpoſal, acknowledge
“ myſelf bound to live to thy glory, and
“ vow by thy grace to be obedient and faith-
“ ful to the death. This is not the firſt time
“ I have thus covenanted; but now I chear-
“ fully renew the engagement, being ſenſi-
“ ble that I cannot be bound too faſt. I am
“ continually in fear, if the cords be not
“ ſtrengthened, leſt, in this fluctuating world,
“ I ſhould break from my anchor, and be
“ driven off from thee. I do here therefore
“ again, upon the body and blood of Chriſt,

“swear to be obedient and faithful. Lord,
“thou art witness to my oath, be thou my
“help!”——Can any thing be conceived more
awful and binding than a covenant so trans-
acted?

It follows, that the Lord's supper is a means
and sign of our participating in the benefits
of the covenant; such as, peace of conscience,
joy in the Holy Ghost, strength of grace, and
more overflowing hopes of future blessedness.
I have not mentioned the pardon of sin; be-
cause whenever the sinner repents, and ap-
plies to *the blood of sprinkling*, his sins are
immediately forgiven him. His pardon is not
delayed till he comes to the sacrament; nor,
if a man comes to it in an unrepenting and
unpardoned state, does he go away justified,
only for the merit of this action: which, I
fear, is the mistaken notion of some, who
seem to make use of the sacrament, as too ma-
ny in the church of Rome do of confession to
a priest, to pay off the old score, that they
may go upon a new one: A mistake too dan-
gerous to be slighted, and too absurd to need
a long confutation. All such thoughts are ef-
fectually overturned by this one conside-
ration, that the only terms of forgiveness are
faith and repentance; faith working by love,
and repentance issuing in obedience: so that

where these are, there is forgiveness; where these are wanting, in vain does any one take sanctuary at the Lord's table; which can no more afford shelter to such, than the altar did to the murderer that fled to it. The law is express, *Thou shalt take him from my altar, that he may die* *. But though God hath no where tied the forgiveness of sin to men's receiving the sacrament; yet since forgiveness itself, and the comfortable sense of that forgiveness, are two things, and the latter admits of variety of degrees, we may hope to find great advantages by conscientiously attending on the Lord's supper, with regard to the assurance of God's forgiving love, and a larger effusion of the Spirit of light, and holiness, and consolation, upon us. Of all this the sacrament of the supper is a proper means, as it tends to beget in us those pious affections and holy purposes, on which God will never fail to confer his covenant blessings. What thankfulness, what love, what indignation, what zeal, what desire, must the sight of what is here beheld, raise in an ingenuous mind! thankfulness to God, love to Jesus, indignation against sin, zeal in the service of our dear Lord, and desire of being approved, and accepted of him. No ordinance better fitted

* Exod xxi. 14.

than this to kindle devout affections, wherein we have the Prince of life crucified before our eyes, suffering, bleeding, groaning, dying, and all this for our sakes, to save us, and destroy sin; a scene fitted to work on all our passions, and at the same time to engage the concurrence of our reasonable powers. Our affections in this ordinance can never be wrought up to that degree, (I mean the affections before mentioned), but that our reason will approve of it, and even require more. To which let me add, that receiving the sacrament being, in respect of the sincere Christian, an act of obedience and love, both to God and his Saviour, he may warrantably expect that it shall not go unrewarded. He comes because it is his duty, and his duty is his delight; and will not God bestow some marks of his special favour upon his willing and chearful servant? And then, as this sacrament is a means, so, to every worthy receiver, it is a sign of his participating in the benefits of the covenant. "For surely, O
"my soul, this eating and drinking was not
"ordained to be an empty idle ceremony!
"The thing signified, is thy feeding by faith
"on the body and blood of Christ; or rather
"thy communicating in the glorious and
"happy effects of his body broken, and blood

“ shed. So indeed thou dost at other times;
 “ but more particularly now, that thy faith
 “ in a crucified Saviour is actually exerted,
 “ and accompanies the memorials of his
 “ death. He that gave himself for thee on
 “ the cross, and gives himself to thee in the
 “ sacrament of the supper, can with-hold no-
 “ thing from thee.” Does not the very time
 seem to justify our expectation of partaking in
the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of
God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost?
 What time so proper to receive the mani-
 festations of these, if we put ourselves in a
 readiness for them, as when we are receiving
 the pledges of them, and renewing that co-
 venant in which they are promised? Having
received gifts for men, when will our King
 bestow them, if not at his own table?—This
 concludes the fifth head, viz. *The death of*
Christ may be considered as that of our sacri-
fice.

S E C T. VII.

VI. **O**UR Redeemer died as a conqueror. So
 it is expressly said, that *through death*
he destroyed him that had the power of death, that
is the devil; and delivered them, who, through

*fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage**. The wisdom of God is remarkably seen in defeating the malice of wicked men, and apostate spirits, by those very means which they make use of to bring their evil devices to pass. How great was Satan's triumph, when, having put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ, and pushed on the Jews and Romans to crucify him, he saw the dreadful deed accomplished! little thinking, that what he so rejoiced at, would prove the most dangerous blow to his empire that he ever received. Christ had overcome the devil in the wilderness; on the cross his victory over him is rendered more compleat, by the influence of his death to destroy sin, and to abolish death, the effect of sin. By the same act that Samson brought death upon himself, he involved great numbers of the enemies of God in the same common destruction. But, strictly speaking, it was not Samson's death that was fatal to the Philistines, but the last act of his life: whereas, in the present case, death itself was the way of victory. There have been instances of those who have conquered at death, and, having beaten their enemies, have then died well pleased. Lo, here is one who conquers,

* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

by dying, not a common enemy, but the universal and the last enemy of mankind, even death itself! He was born that he might die, and he died to rise again. Our Saviour's *destroying him that had the power of death*, is best explained by his *abolishing death**; the same word being used in both places, though differently translated. *It is appointed to all men once to die*†. But then Christ died that he might destroy, or make void, that death which *passeth upon all men*‡, by obtaining a resurrection for all; and for all that do good, a resurrection to eternal life and happiness. And by making void all that death had been doing for so many thousand years, he frustrates or makes void, the design of that wicked spirit, through whose temptations man first lost immortality, and by whom, as a sort of conqueror, the human race is held in bondage to the fear of death, and the grave. Christ the second Adam, or head of our race, dying without having deserved death, and dying in our stead, recovers that immortality which the first Adam by his sin had forfeited for himself and posterity. Under this notion, then, let us think of our dying Lord when we shew forth his death in the sacrament of the supper. Let us think of him as vanquishing,

* 2 Tim. i. 10. † Heb. ix. 27. ‡ Rom. v. 12.

not as vanquished. Let his death be considered by us as the purchase of our immortality; and his resurrection, which in this case we ought not to separate from his death, being so nearly and so necessarily connected with it, as the pledge and assurance of it. By this means we shall find refuge in the meditations of Christ's death, especially at the table, against the fears of our own. "Why
" should I fear to die? why fear to pass in-
" to the state of the dead? Hath not my Sa-
" viour tasted of the same bitter cup? and
" was not his death soon followed by his re-
" surrection? In like manner, though I die,
" I shall live again, because Christ liveth.
" The interval indeed is like to be much
" longer between my death and my resur-
" rection: but what of that, since the souls
" of the faithful immediately go to be where
" Christ is; and I have the same certainty
" that I shall rise in the last day, as that my
" Redeemer is already risen; and that I shall
" rise to dwell with Christ for ever, as that
" I live and die to him now? For this rea-
" son, while I am commemorating the death
" of my Redeemer, I will take the occasion
" to celebrate his conquest over death; and
" to comfort myself with the prospect of that
" universal triumph of all his members over

“ it, which is reserved to complete and crown
“ the solemnities of the last day. ‘ O death,
“ where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy
“ victory? The sting of death is sin; and
“ the strength of sin is the law. But thanks
“ be to God who giveth us the victory, through
“ our Lord Jesus Christ *.”

VII. We may consider the death of Christ as the ground of his exaltation. For because ‘ he
‘ humbled himself, and became obedient unto
‘ death, even the death of the cross; therefore
‘ also hath God highly exalted him, and given
‘ him a name which is above every name: that
‘ at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
‘ of things in heaven, and things on earth, and
‘ things under the earth; and that every tongue
‘ should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the
‘ glory of God the Father†.’ The whole world
is subject to his authority; and all that can,
are to acknowledge it, by a voluntary sub-
jection of themselves to it. In another place,
God himself is brought in saying to his Son,
‘ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a
‘ sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy
‘ kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness,
‘ and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy
‘ God, hath anointed thee with the oil of glad-

* 1 Cor. xv. 55,—57. † Phil. ii. 8,—11.

‘nefs above thy fellows†;’ advanced thee far above all those, who, like thee, partake of the royal state and dignity. From these two places compared together, we learn, that what was so highly pleasing to God in the death of his Son, and that for which he hath exalted him to his own right-hand, investing him with all power both in heaven and in earth, is the obedience and submission to the will of God which he manifested therein; his love of holiness, and zeal for the advancement of it, which was the great motive to his undertaking the office of Mediator between God and man, and discovers itself throughout the execution of it. From the humiliation of Christ the Son of God, which is the first scene that opens to us when we are participating in the memorials of his death, let us pass in our thoughts to his exaltation, which soon followed. *He first suffered, and then entered into glory.* From hence I am instructed by what method I may gain the divine favour, and advance myself in it: not by praising his filial obedience, and resignation under sufferings, while I indulge to a fretful and repining temper myself; not by trusting to his righteousness, when I am without the love of righteousness in my own heart, and a stranger

† Heb. i. 8, 9.

to the practice of it in my life. I cannot think, if I think soberly, that I can rise by any other way than that in which the Son of God did; that though I do not imitate him in his hatred of iniquity, yet for his sake who hated it, and because he hated it, God will bestow the same marks of his favour upon me, as on those that are most like him; and that a part of that glory which he received as the reward of his holiness and obedience, shall descend on me, who have nothing to produce of either; not even the lowest degree of gospel-sincerity. Let this convince me of the necessity of holiness, that I may please God, and animate me to endeavour after the highest measures of it; since in the same degree as I approach my Saviour now, I shall approach him in happiness and glory hereafter.—Once more,

S E C T. VIII.

VIII. **T**HE death of Christ may be considered in the relation it bears to his second appearance. For as often as we eat this his bread, and drink this his cup, we do shew his death till he come. Come he will then; and till he does come, his church on earth is never to cease shewing forth his death.

*As he was once offered to bear the sins of many; so unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, (i. e. an offering for sin), unto salvation *.* He then came to purchase salvation, now to confer it. These two, viz. the first and second coming of Christ, how great soever the distance of time may be between the one and the other, ought to be joined in the Christian's view, as they are mentioned together in the passage just now cited, *As often as ye eat this bread, &c.* We believe that Christ died, and to publish this belief, we shew his death in this ordinance: but we believe also, that he rose again from the dead, that he ascended up far above all heavens, and that from thence he shall descend in the same manner as his disciples saw him go into heaven; and, in testimony of this our belief, we *shew his death till he come.* This ordinance hath a double aspect in one. It does at the same time look backward and forward; being a thankful commemoration of the meritorious, though accursed death which our Saviour suffered when he first came into the world, by virtue of which commemoration it becomes a joyful pledge of his second glorious advent; and as such he left it to his church; which is never to part with the pledge, till the person

* Heb. ix. 28.

himself comes to redeem it by his presence. An appearance this is which every lover of Christ should rejoice to think on; ready to cry out in the ecstasies of his passion, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! In this mystery I see thee darkly, as through a glass. O when shall I behold thee face to face! When will *the Sun of righteousness* break through all interposing veils, that these shadows may be done away, and his spouse the church have the pleasure of seeing him in all his glory! Sweet are the approaches he now makes to our souls; these distant and cloudy views are a mighty refreshment; how much will the pleasure be increased when I shall be *absent from the body, and present with the Lord**! Above all, when I shall put on my glorified body, and, with the many thousands, and thousand times ten thousand of his saints that have ever lived upon earth, shall *ascend to meet him in the air*†; be publicly absolved and acknowledged by him, and by him presented holy and without blame to God even our Father; see him arrayed in majesty and love, and fall worshipping at his feet: Lord, what will our transports be!"—Did this sacred action

* 2 Cor. v. 8. † 1 Thess. iv. 17.

only lead us back to the death of Christ, and signify no more, it would be but a heartless and a melancholy entertainment; we should sit pensive at his table, and have no objects before us, but such as were fitted to feed our sorrow: but, blessed be God, from the death of Christ it carries our view to the concluding day of the world, when he shall be revealed in the glory of the Father, and of his holy angels; and thine eyes, O Christian, shall behold him, thine, and not another's! Thy Saviour died, but he is not perished; he ever liveth to govern the world, and intercede for his church; he is gone, but not with a design never more to return. And this must needs be a pleasing meditation to one whose soul is continually reaching out after his Redeemer. The faithful Israelite was characterised by his earnest expectation of the first coming of the Messiah; the true Christian is known by the belief and hope of the second coming of his Lord, and his care to prepare for it. The sacrifices under the law prefigured Christ's oblation of himself on the cross: but that the Jews had a distinct notion of this figurative meaning of their sacrifices, and thereby had their faith supported and assisted in regard of that sacrifice which was to be offered in the fulness of time, is

not so certain: whereas the Christian hath in his hands the memorials of that precious death, as a kind of security of his coming again under a more godlike form. The first appearance of Christ put an end to the figures of the law; this second will abolish the ceremonial ordinances of the gospel; and gladly will the church make this exchange of faith for vision, of the shadow for the substance, of the sign for the thing signified. For though the faithful love this ordinance much, they love Jesus himself more, for whose sake alone they love the institution. *Him having not seen, they love; and in him, though now they see him not, believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory* *. “ And “ is it so, that I love the appearance of “ Christ, and am persuaded that all those “ things that are said concerning the awful “ circumstances of that appearance, and the “ important and everlasting consequences of “ it, shall certainly come to pass; Lord, “ what manner of person then ought I to be “ in all holy conversation and godliness! Is “ it one end of my partaking of the Lord’s “ supper to declare my belief of Christ’s “ coming again to judge the world, and to be “ glorified in his saints? and ought not this

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

“to mind me of another thing which I
 “should propose by it, even the making
 “more ready for his coming, and behaving
 “with a constant regard to that great day,
 “that so I may be able to give up my account
 “with joy? Let me watch, because I know
 “not the hour when our Lord shall come;
 “and let me never forget, that such as I am
 “at the time of my death I shall be found in
 “judgment, and that my death is like to be
 “conformable to my life.”

R E F L E C T I O N S.

THIS discourse will naturally lead us to make the few following reflections.

S E C T. I.

1. **T**HE main use, and (with some restriction we may say) the ultimate design of the Lord's supper, is, the promoting of the life of God in the soul, and the practice of universal righteousness and goodness; the noblest end that can be accomplished in us, being inseparably connected with the glory of

God, and our own final felicity. And, perhaps, no one ordinance advances this end so visibly and effectually as this does; not only as we are hereby put in remembrance of our duty, and discern the manifold obligations to it, and do more directly and strongly engage to walk circumspectly, holily, and unblameably; but also, and principally, as the motives to a holy and Christian life, drawn from the allurements of example, the ties of gratitude, the almost irresistible force of love; from the most amiable and encouraging representations of the Deity, the most inviting prospects of another world, the glorious rewards of piety beyond the grave; and, finally, from the worthlessness and insignificancy of all those things which are the usual incentives to corrupt affections, and temptations to sinful actions, are all comprised, and, as it were, closely crowded together in this one institution. What one thing is wanting to exercise the spirit of devotion, or to increase it? to actuate every virtue or grace, and to engage us to grow and improve in it? It is a sort of summary of all the helps and encouragements which God hath vouchsafed us in the way to heaven. So that whoever does not take it in this view, but rests in the present action, as having I know not what kind

of charm and efficacy to do us a great deal of good, without making us a whit better, hath certainly a very wrong notion of it. Nor can Christians be too often warned against splitting on this rock, which hath been fatal to so many. The Lord's supper is a venerable institution; but, after all, is no more than an instrumental duty, and so not to be compared with the inward power of Christianity, and the substantial virtues of a good life. These are of indispensable necessity, and eternal excellence: whereas all the external parts and offices of religion are of more or less value according to their greater or less subserviency, as means accompanied with the influences of divine grace to promote these ends; and, consequently, where these ends are not in any degree answered by them, all the esteem we profess for them, and all the attendance we give them, is in the sight of God, of no weight or value at all.

2. By the same rule, the character of the person who hath a right to come to the Lord's table, and who therefore ought to accept of the invitation to come, will be easily settled. He that hath in some good measure already attained to that temper of mind, and leads that kind of life which this ordinance was in-

tended, and is so remarkably fitted to carry on and perfect, hath the qualifications of a worthy communicant. He hath faith, and hope, and charity; is humble and penitent; loves his Saviour more than all; makes conscience of every known duty, and flees every known sin; and having the thing itself, which we call *religion*, cannot want a competent knowledge of it, which he will endeavour to render more clear and comprehensive. He may be very imperfect in all these respects; but will he therefore abstain from the Lord's supper, when, by devoutly attending upon that institution, he may reasonably hope to be assisted in going on to perfection? His very sense of his imperfections, as long as he does not allow himself in them, is a good sign; and ought at once to encourage him, and to make him willing to accept of all the helps and directions he can get, in order to his gaining greater heights. When he is asked, why he does not come to the holy communion? can he appeal to his own heart, that if he thought it his duty, all circumstances considered, he would not, upon any account whatever, stay away? How easily may this be turned upon him, and made use of to convince him, to his own great comfort, of the very thing he doubts of, *viz.* his right,

and consequently his obligation to communicate? Would he rejoice to come, if all hindrances were removed? Then it is plain he loves the duty. He gladly would communicate, if he thought he might; and endeavours to get all the satisfaction he can in the matter, that is, he discharges his duty in other instances, and would do so in this, but that he fears his sin would be greater in coming, than it is in staying away. And is not this a proof of that good conscience, which, if any thing can do it, must intitle a man to this privilege? But perhaps there are those who fancy something more is necessary than sincerity; or that the danger is so exceeding great of communicating upon a mistaken supposition of our having a right, when we have none, that nothing but a certainty of our having that right will justify us in running such a dreadful hazard. As to the former; if sincerity, and not any particular eminent degrees of holiness, be the condition of salvation, there can be no good ground, surely, to imagine that some further condition is necessary to qualify us for commemorating our Saviour. If the latter be their fear, and this their fear be well grounded, how very few that had well considered the thing, would venture to receive, when the number is probably so

small of those who can be said to be certain of their integrity? But let us not frighten ourselves where there is no need. If we should come to the Lord's supper, not being, strictly speaking, meet to partake of it, there is nothing in this action, being done upon a mistake, but we may very well suppose God will overlook and pardon, as long as we come out of conscience, and with a pious design; and, if we are yet short of a Christian stature, are endeavouring every day to come up to it. Nor is there any thing in the nature of the institution itself that should give us these terrible apprehensions of it. For let us suppose that we had nothing relating to this matter in scripture, but the account which the Evangelists have delivered to us of the institution, viz. that 'Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body: and that he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins:' and that, at the conclusion of this holy feast, 'having sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives *.' Is there any thing in the words of the institution, or in the circumstances of

* Matth. xxvi. 26,—30.

that first supper, that should deter any Christian of a sober conversation from doing as he is here commanded? On the contrary, is there not every thing to invite, and in a manner force his compliance; the nature of the action being nothing else but a festival supper, of a religious kind, the condescending familiarity of the Master with his disciples; and the design of it to keep up the memory of their friend and benefactor? And may we not therefore safely conclude, that nothing we meet with in any other part of scripture, can be inconsistent with the encouragement which every upright soul may draw from the original institution, unless there is some particular reason added for it? But now that passage in St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, (which is the place that hath given birth to so many groundless scruples and terrors, or at least hath been made use of to feed them), hath nothing of that nature. It contains a reproof of some in that church for their receiving the Lord's supper in so scandalous, so irreverent, and so disorderly a manner, that they might very well be said *not to discern the Lord's body*; not observing that decorum and sobriety at the Lord's table, which all Christians ought to do at their common meals; and much less making a due distinction be-

tween that sacred repast, and their usual ones. Who could have said less on this occasion than the Apostle does? or who not think that a like irreverence would unfit us for the ordinary worship of God? Notwithstanding which, we do not reckon ourselves excused from coming to the house of God, but only obliged to behave with greater reverence when we are there. It is true, the Apostle says, *that he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body* *. But let the Apostle himself explain what he means by *eating and drinking unworthily*, and what by that *damnation* that is hereby incurred. The irregularities of the Corinthian church, which occasioned this part of the Apostle's letter to them, will explain the former; and what they suffered upon this account, the latter. *For this cause* (as it follows in the very next verse) *many among you are weak and sickly, and many sleep* †, or die. So that bodily disorders, sickness, and death, were that *judgment* (for so the word signifies) which such unworthy receivers ate and drank to themselves: not *damnation*, as we commonly understand it, of future and everlasting punishment; as is plain to a demonstration from

* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

† 1 Cor. xi. 30.

what the Apostle himself saith, that they were thus *judged or chastened of the Lord*, that they *might not be condemned with the world* *. And this will help to clear the other expression (verse. 27.) of their being *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. It signifies their shewing such a disrespect to the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, as would expose them to the tokens of God's displeasure here mentioned. I shall only add, That this instance of severity was no more than necessary, in the beginning of Christianity, to beget in the minds of men a proper reverence for the institutions of the gospel; and is agreeable to the method ordinarily observed both by God and men, in making examples of those who are guilty of the first acts of contempt and disobedience against their laws and constitutions. Thus concerning the man that was found gathering sticks on the Sabbath-day, God thus makes known his pleasure: *He shall surely be put to death, all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp* †. Thus Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, for bringing part of the price of the possession which they had sold, as if it had been the whole, (which is called *lying to the Holy Ghost* ‡,) are both of them struck dead upon

* 1 Cor. xi. 32. † Numb. xv. 35. ‡ Acts v. 3.

the spot. This instance of severity, added to that other before-mentioned, of the infliction of diseases and death upon several members of the Corinthian church, may seem not very well to suit with the nature of the gospel-law, which is a law of love; yet when it is considered, that this was in order to secure the greater veneration to the Christian religion, then in its infancy, and to convince the world, that as it came from God, so it was under his peculiar regard and protection, we shall no longer wonder at the reason of it.

S E C T. II.

3. **W**E may from hence satisfy ourselves as to the preparation necessary to every particular communicant. Am I called to shew forth the death of Christ? And am I in a state and disposition of mind for this sacred action? have I clean hands, and a pure heart? Am I under no such disorders, either of body or mind, as would incapacitate me for attending upon this ordinance without distraction, and receiving advantage by it? Why then should I banish myself from it? It may be I have not been able to spend the usual time in the exercises of devotion preparatory thereto:

but since this hath been through no fault of my own, not out of choice but necessity, and I think myself, notwithstanding, in a tolerable degree disposed for the ordinary worship of the Lord's day, so as to be able to compose my thoughts, and raise my affections towards heavenly things; why should I imagine myself forbidden to approach the Lord's table? Is much more time necessary to empty my heart of worldly thoughts and cares than I am master of? If so, I have reason to fear that I love the world abundantly too well, or am too much involved in the business of it; and shall therefore do better to set myself to remove the cause of my complaints, I mean that inordinate affection to the world, which makes it so difficult for me to get leave to go aside and converse with God, than letting this alone, to be obliged to have recourse to certain extraordinary acts of meditation, prayer, and humiliation, at the approach of every communion; and to lay the main stress of my preparation at least, if not of my religion, upon these. If this neither be the cause of mens thinking such a particular portion of time employed in devotional exercises absolutely necessary to their preparation, let them inquire whether there be not something of superstition in this, which is a thing that will

not add either to the comfort or the credit of their religion? Does not our fear of God himself degenerate into superstition, when it breeds a fervility of spirit, and perpetual inquietudes; making us apprehend his displeasure for things which we do not see any intrinsic evil in, and do not know that he hath forbidden? In like manner, is not our regard to any ordinance superstitious, when we are afraid to attend upon that ordinance, because we have not had time to do more by way of preparation for it than is any where required of us? For where is it said, that we must spend so much time in preparation for the Lord's supper, or not come to it? Methinks I would not have sincere and devout souls fetter the free spirit of religion with unnecessary, and even prejudicial rules, and lay burdens and limitations on themselves, which God hath not laid upon them. As long as they guard against extremes, I am far from dissuading or discouraging their indulging to their pious inclinations; on the contrary, I shall take leave to offer them a word or two of advice as to the manner of employing their time, when they have it, that they may come to this holy festival with the greatest composure and elevation of soul they possibly can.

Let them examine, whether, as to the habi-

tual temper of their minds, and the general tenor and flow of their lives, they go backward or forward in their religion. Let them be thankful for any victories they have been enabled by the grace of God to gain over themselves and the world, and for any progress they have made in the Christian life; and at the same time humble themselves before God for any defects which upon inquiry appear to them; that their conformity to the example and precepts of Jesus is no greater, and that they are not more steadily and powerfully influenced by his love. Let the grace of God that hath wrought effectually in them, notwithstanding all their infirmities, animate them to go on chearfully the rest of their way; and by the instances wherein they have been wanting in the improvement of this grace, let them be taught to be more watchful, circumspect, and abounding in good works for the future. Let them reflect whether there be not some particular part of their conduct, which does not so well suit with the rules of their Christian profession, nor match so agreeably with other parts of their character; whether there be any liberties or indulgencies, which, though innocent in themselves, yet, because of their having proved snares and temptations to them, they ought not to have

allowed themselves in; any gift or grace that needs to be stirred up; and let them strive to come behind in no one thing, whereby they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.

As to meditation; let them especially make choice of those things for the entertainment of their minds, which have the most apparent tendency to weaken their engagements with the present world, and to strengthen the union of their hearts to God and Jesus, those transforming objects; to enlighten them with juster notions of the nature of true religion and godliness, and to shew them the necessity, the beauty, and the advantages of it: that so all the springs and principles of activity in the Christian life may, as much as possible, be reduced to this one of holy love and delight, or at least may not interfere with it; such things as will warm their hearts with sentiments of zeal and gratitude, render sin more hateful and detestable in their eyes, and quicken their desires after the perfection of the heavenly world. Meditations of this kind would have the happiest effect upon them to awaken their drowsy, or to cheer and enliven their drooping minds; and by that means would make them approach the Lord's table with equal care and satisfaction.

For the sake of some let me add, by way of caution, That, in our preparations for the sacrament, there is need of prudence, that while we are afraid of taking too little time, we do not impose tasks upon ourselves beyond our strength, and tire and exhaust those spirits which we should only exercise; the consequence of which will be, that we shall have no life and vigour left when we come to the Lord's table, and so be ready to impute to our indevotion what is really the effect of our indiscretion. Having made us men, creatures composed of flesh and spirit, God requires not of us the same flame and intention of devotion as from angels; but *considereth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust*: which is reason enough why we ourselves should do it.

4. We may from hence too form a judgment of worthy receiving, as well as of the worthy receiver. As he is the most worthy receiver, who hath most of Jesus in him, of his mind, his image, his spirit; so that is the most worthy manner of receiving that flows from these principles. It does not consist in rapturous flights of the imagination, and strong workings of the passions; which have their foundation in the natural constitution, more than in a clear discernment of the spi-

ritual meaning and intent of the ordinance, and a lively sense of the great benefits resulting from it. When I have Jesus Christ evidently set forth as crucified before my eyes, am I moved with the thought of it after much the same manner as I am at the recital of a sad story? and does the impression wear away like that of *a tale that is told*? However I may flatter myself, these are not so much the operations of grace as of nature. The Christian that is assisted by this ordinance to see the great evil of sin, and the love of Jesus in delivering from it; and to perceive the many forcible motives and engagements to all holiness of conversation that he here meets with, so as to be more in love with his duty, (by which only he can know^o that he loves his Saviour more), to have his pious resolutions more established, the tenderness and sensibility of his conscience increased, and to be brought more under the influence of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity in all his actions; this is he who receives most worthily, whether he hath or hath not, the happiness of warm and melting affections. For we are not to make an estimate of ourselves by these, but by other marks. These, it is true, are very desirable things, and to be sought after, though not in the first place:

but then they are not necessary in all, and perhaps in none at all times; and they may deceive us, not being joined with the things now mentioned: whereas these latter are of such a nature, that in case we find them in ourselves, we cannot be mistaken in arguing from them to our own advantage.

In regard to the thoughts and meditations that are most proper at the Lord's table, some help and direction may be had from what hath been offered in the preceeding discourse*, and still more from the holy scripture; provided in the course of our reading we remark such passages, and endeavour to imprint them on our minds and memories, as will very naturally bear to be applied to the sacrament of the supper, and be of use to feed the flame of devotion while we are partaking of it.

5. There seems to be no great occasion for any distinct rules concerning our behaviour after the holy communion. For what should our behaviour be afterwards, but the same as it ought to be before, and at all other times, that is, uniformly holy and good? A fancy that we are obliged to greater strictness the next day, or following week, after a sacra-

* The devotional exercises were not in the first edition of this discourse.

ment, than we are when it hath been longer past, may be of ill consequence; and will certainly be so, if we think the more strict we are before and after a sacrament, the less care of our behaviour we are obliged to in the time between. A life of Christian piety, being the end designed to be promoted by every duty of divine worship, particularly by the Lord's supper, is what we are to be concerned for, and not to trust to occasional heats and starts in religion.

6. We here see the advantage of frequent communions, and the answer to the common objection against them. The advantage is, That these frequent communions tend to promote our progress in the Christian life; the objection against them, That communions, if frequent, will lose their solemnity. But I very much doubt that in this case people deceive themselves with a wrong notion of solemnity. Do they mean, that they shall not come with that unaccountable awe and dread upon their minds? And what if they do not, as long as they are serious and devout? We should think it very odd reasoning, should we hear men take up a resolution not to worship God all the week long in their families or closets, to the end the duties of God's wor-

ship may be the more solemn when performed in his own house, and on his own day. And yet the cases are not altogether unlike. An habitual seriousness and fervour of spirit is undoubtedly, in the nature of things, to be expected from the frequent returns of holy duties, and not from long intermissions of them: and the more habitually serious we are, so much the better, and in so much the better preparation shall we be to wait upon God in every ordinance. Let us not therefore of choice take up with very rare communions; or, where circumstances will admit of it, be against having them more frequently. If we communicate seldom, because we cannot communicate oftener, we must be contented, and do as well as we can; but by no means be the better pleased with our situation in this respect, and think we have more reverence for the Lord's supper than some have, for no other reason than that we do not come to it so often. In a word, let us study how to make this and every duty of religion profitable to the building us up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

A T R E A T I S E
ON THE
OBLIGATION OF THE
PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY

To celebrate the LORD'S SUPPER; with
an Answer to the principal excuses for
neglecting it.

HAVING in the foregoing treatise explained the nature and design of the Lord's supper; because notwithstanding the apparent excellency and obligation of this institution of our Saviour, too many by profession Christians, indulge themselves in the neglect of it, I shall distinctly consider the obligation lying on the disciples of Christ to communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, and some of the principal reasons which hinder the most from complying with this obligation.

That you may clearly apprehend the obligation lying upon the disciples of Christ to communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, I would offer the following consider-

H

rations to your serious and most impartial thoughts.

1. Consider the expressness of the command. Can any words be more plain and direct than those which we meet with, in the account given of this institution by the Evangelist Luke,——*This do in remembrance of me**?——There might have been a little more room to question whether this was not a temporary command, a command to continue in force only while the Apostles lived, there being none present but the Apostles when this sacrament was instituted, if the very reason or ground of the command did not shew the contrary. The bread and wine in the sacrament signify the *body and blood of Christ*; his *body broken*, and his *blood shed, for the remission of sins*: and unless any one will say, that we have not the same concern in the death of Christ, and the atonement for sin made by it, as the first Christians, the argument from hence will, I think, be unanswerable, That the sacrifice of Christ being intended alike for the benefit of all ages, and the covenant of grace thereby confirmed extending to all, the institution of the supper, which was designed to lead the thoughts and meditations of Christians to this sacrifice,

* Luke xxii. 19.

must equally regard all; especially if we add the words just mentioned, that the Apostles were to do this *in remembrance of Christ i. e.* after he was gone from them, they were to repeat this action, in order to keep up the remembrance of him in the world, and to preserve it fresh in themselves. It is evident at first sight, that the celebrating his memory among his disciples, is in general hereby intended. And is not the consequence visible, that if the followers of Christ, in all ages of the world, are bound to honour the memory of their Saviour, and as much need the assistance of an outward rite to this purpose, as Christ's immediate disciples did, then this precept must include the one as well as the other? yea more especially those who came after; since they must be more in danger of forgetting their Master, than his first disciples were who personally knew him, or conversed with those that did, and were continually talking about the wonders of his life and death, and resurrection and ascension, which were then fresh transactions? They might better, sure, dispense with an ordinance dedicated to the memory of Christ, who never almost suffered him to be out of their minds and mouths, than following ages; to whom therefore this command appears to belong,

from the very reason of it subjoined, viz. that it was to be in remembrance of Christ. And that there might not be the least reasonable doubt left about the perpetuity of this ordinance, the Apostle Paul tells the Corinthians, (and in them the Christians of succeeding times), that *as often as they ate this bread, and drank this cup, they did shew the Lord's death till he come**;—an expression which would have been exceeding improper, if the institution was to have an end so soon after it began. How could the disciples of Christ be said to shew or represent his death in this ordinance till his coming, if those only of the first age were to shew it forth after this manner? Do not the words manifestly imply, that as Christ would always have a church upon earth, so it would be the duty of the members of it, one generation after another, to commemorate the death of their Master, till he *should appear the second time, and receive them to himself*, when there would be no occasion to do it? The command therefore I apprehend, as taking in all ages, is undeniable; and consequently the obligation upon all to observe it: for I hope there are none so absurd, as, while they profess to believe the truth of the gospel, to deny their

* I Cor. xi. 26.

being bound by the commands of it. If the gospel be true, then every precept it contains is from God, has the stamp of his authority, and is the result of his infinite wisdom. And if so, what other meaning can voluntary disobedience to any command bear but this, that the disobedient person regards not the authority of the most high God, and questions the wisdom of his precepts? For had he that awe of the divine authority, and that persuasion of the divine wisdom, in any command or institution, which should, and does possess every pious breast, he would not knowingly and wilfully refuse his compliance with any one injunction of the gospel. And indeed he might as consistently withhold his obedience from one command as another, and from all, as do it avowedly from any one, according to the reasoning of the Apostle James, that *he who keepeth the whole law, and offends in one point, (i. e. voluntarily and habitually), is guilty of all* *; guilty of presumptuously disowning that authority which supports all the rest. This is the language of wilfully neglecting any command of God; which holds of the Lord's supper, as well as of other commands of the gospel. Wilful disobedience here, as in all other cases, admits

* James ii. 10.

of no excuse, amounting to a practical denial of the authority and wisdom of God in his laws. It nearly concerns the absenters from the Lord's table, to take this matter into their most serious consideration. Are they perfectly negligent and thoughtless about receiving the Lord's supper? Do they go on, one year after another, without troubling themselves about it; never inquiring whether it be or be not a command of the gospel, and whether it does or does not reach them; and even putting the thought from them when they have a suspicion it does? Have they no solicitude at all upon their spirits to approve themselves unto God, by walking in all his commandments blameless; desirous to know their duty in its whole extent, and to practise every part of it? For certain, if this be not wilful disobedience, it is a very near approach to it, and carries in it a great share of the same guilt. Nor can it, I think, be supposed of any sincere Christian, that he should pay so little respect to the commands of the gospel as this. Every such person must be under a real concern to know his duty in every instance, (particularly with regard to his communicating in the Lord's supper), and to discharge it when known. But though he takes some care, yet it may be not all that he

ought, to clear up the matter to himself, and to disengage himself from all hindrances, that he may not live in the neglect of that which is so expressly a command of Christ.

2. Consider the person who is the immediate author of this command, and in memory of whom it is appointed. This is no other than Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour; to whom we acknowledge ourselves infinitely indebted, and would be thought to have the greatest affection and regard. And certain it is, that we have the greatest reason for this acknowledgment, inasmuch as this most excellent person has given us proofs of his kindness to us, and concern for our happiness, the most surprising that can be imagined. *Being in the form of God, and having a glory with him before the world was, he did for our sakes take on him the form of a servant; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself yet lower, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross**; and to what end, but that he might expiate our sins by his blood, and obtain eternal redemption for us? The principle of all that our blessed Saviour did and suffered upon earth, and transacts in heaven, is love to the sinful children of men. *They being partakers of flesh and blood, he also*

* Philip. ii. 6, &c. John xvii. 5.

himself willingly took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.- For verily he took not hold of the fallen angels to restore them, but fallen men the seed of Abraham.* So that it must be owned that never was love like that of our Saviour's, as never sorrow was like his. And love requires love; the love of the Redeemer, the love of the redeemed. And there is no Christian but makes profession of love to Christ. Upon which let me beg you to reflect a little. Hath Christ *loved me and given himself for me*†? And do I really love him? Then shall I be ready to do every thing that is necessary to evidence the sincerity of my own love, and the sense I have of the unexampled greatness of his. Whatever is a proper and indispensable test of these, I shall joyfully comply with. And is not this the test which our Lord himself has given his disciples, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*‡? Among these commandments, our shewing forth his death in the sacrament of the supper, is one; to which therefore we are obliged as a testimony of our love to the person who lays this

* Heb. ii. 14, &c. † Gal. ii. 20. ‡ John xiv. 15.

command upon us. And what adds very much to the obligation, is, that this great friend of ours is not only the author of this institution, but the object of it too. It has an immediate reference to him, was appointed in honour of him, and is consecrated to his memory. And for the same reason, then, as we are bound to love Christ, and to have our hearts filled with sentiments of gratitude to him, must we not be obliged to express our love and gratitude by our love to his memory, and earnest desire to do him all the honour of which we are capable; wishing that we were able to do more, and could persuade others to entertain the same affectionate sentiments towards him, as we ourselves have? Must we not acknowledge, that we are obliged to all this; and, by consequence, to put ourselves in a condition to come without any more delay to the Lord's table, to which we have been so often invited? The design of this ordinance being to do honour to the Redeemer, and to perpetuate the memory of his virtues, and of his dying love in the world; such a design every lover of Christ must heartily approve, and think himself happy if he can be a means of accomplishing it in any degree.

3. Consider the nature and properties of this institution. It is the most distinguishing

of all the precepts of the gospel,—exceeding plain and intelligible,—easy to be performed,—and greatly to our advantage. Let us briefly revolve these several things in our thoughts, and we shall be more sensible of the obligation we are under to do as our Saviour has commanded us.

1st, It is the most distinguishing command of the gospel; I mean, of any that relate to the stated ordinary duty of Christians. Baptism is indeed a peculiar institution of the Christian religion: but then, besides that baptism, in regard to far the greatest part of Christians, is administered in infancy, and so is not their own act, we may observe, that it is once for all; being an initiating ordinance, by which we are solemnly introduced into the church or fellowship of Christ; after which we are concerned for no more, but to walk worthy of our dedication to the service of God in this ordinance. Baptism is not to be repeated; whereas the Lord's supper is a standing part of Christian worship, and a duty which the disciples of Christ are to perform again and again, as they have opportunity: *As often as ye eat this bread* *. Now, I beseech you observe how the argument from hence proceeds. Here is a stated per-

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

manent duty of the Christian society, and which at the same time is the most direct and visible mark or badge of our being the disciples of Christ. When we receive the Lord's supper, every communicant takes of the sacramental bread and wine; and by eating and drinking, not only as a religious action, but an action designed to be commemorative of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, publicly avows his relation to Christ as his Lord and Master; and *glories* in it, even in *the cross of Christ*, which of old was *to the Jews a stumbling-block*, and *to the Greeks foolishness**. Such is the declaration which every communicant makes at the Lord's table. It is the known language of his actions; so that if he were to say aloud, "I own myself a disciple of Christ, I rejoice in my being so, and am resolved to make his gospel the rule of all my actions," it would not be more expressive and significant of the thing, than the act of participating itself is. The Lord's supper is so remarkable a part of the Christian institution, that Pliny † writing to the Emperor of Rome about the Christians, who at that time were liable to be punished for their religion by the public laws, gives this account of them, which he had received from some apostates; "That they

* 1 Cor. i. 23. † Epist. l. 10. ep. 97.

“ were wont to assemble on a stated day before it was light, (being then under persecution), and to sing a hymn to Christ as a God; binding themselves by a sacrament, not to the commission of any wickedness; but that they would avoid thefts, robberies, adulteries; would make good their engagements; and when called upon, not deny what was committed to their trust.”

And this being so, that the sacrament of the Lord's supper is so considerable a part of the worship of Christians as such, and so peculiar to it, in which they declare themselves the disciples of Christ; how very strange and unaccountable is it, that there should be so many who seem to have no regard at all to this ordinance, living and dying in the neglect of it? Would not these very persons esteem a church or a community of Christians very imperfect, in which the Lord's supper was never administered? And must not they then be very imperfect Christians, who, having opportunities of attending upon this gospel-institution, continue time after time to decline them? Surely such as these will be condemned out of their own mouths. If a church would be imperfect without the Lord's supper, a single Christian culpably depriving himself of it must be so too.

2dly, Another thing observable in this institution of the Lord's supper, and which renders the neglect of it more criminal, is, that it is exceeding plain and intelligible; I mean as it lies in the scripture; from whence we are taught that this ordinance has the nature of a religious feast, kept in memory of Jesus Christ, *the author and finisher of our faith*. While we are *eating this bread*, and *drinking this cup*, we are to think of Christ, particularly as bearing the punishment of our sins in his body on the cross, and shedding his blood for the remission of them. In this sense it is easy to *discern the Lord's body*, though not in that which the church of Rome has invented. That indeed would put our faith to the stretch, by the utter contradiction it carries in it to our senses and reason; and being itself an impossibility, cannot possibly be conceived. For who can conceive of a human body present under the appearances of bread and wine, and this wholly and entire in a thousand different places at the same time, offered by the priest, eaten by the people, and glorified in heaven? Such a doctrine as this is absolutely unintelligible; and a short, but decisive proof of the fallibility of that church which has decreed it. We may confidently say it may err, when it has actually erred so

very grossly. But the doctrine of transubstantiation is not a doctrine of scripture. What the scripture teaches concerning the relation which the Lord's supper has to Christ, is easily to be apprehended, being only that of the sign to the thing signified. This ordinance is intended to awaken our thoughts and remembrance of Christ; which it almost unavoidably does, when we know beforehand that it was appointed for this end, and this is the end we propose in coming to it.

3dly, To an ingenuous and devout mind, the practice of this duty is as easy, as apprehending the nature and design of it. Nothing can be less burdensome than the outward action; for what is it we are called to do, but to partake of bread and wine in memory of our best friend? And is this so hard a command, that some persons are brought with so much difficulty to comply with it? We may reason here after the same manner as Naaman's servants did with him: *If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? how much rather then when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean*?* The means of cure would put him to so little trouble, that if he had not tried them, he would have deserved to carry his leprosy with

* 2 Kings v. 13.

him to the grave. So, in the present case, there are no proofs, though never so painful, which we should not have been ready to give of our devotedness to Christ, both for his sake and our own. And shall we deny him this small request, that we now and then set apart some time to celebrate his memory together by this solemn rite? Consider, he has not suffered the heavy yoke of Jewish ceremonies to come upon the neck of his disciples; instead of this multitude of ritual observances which the law enjoined, the very number of which would have made them grievous, if nothing else had done it, our Master has substituted but this one simple institution of a ceremonial nature, to be observed by Christians after their admission into the church. And as to the outward action itself, it is so inconsiderable, that were it to return much oftener than it does in most societies, we should not think much to perform it; and this, among other reasons, out of thankfulness to our blessed Lord for the liberty he has purchased for his church from the bondage of Jewish ceremonies. It is true, this duty has an inward as well as an outward part: but the inward part is of a moral nature, consisting in the exercises of love, and gratitude, and devotion; which no pious person will think unreason-

able, since to all persons so disposed they must yield very great delight and satisfaction. Which puts me in mind of the last thing observable in this command,

4thly, That it is very advantageous. It is as much our privilege as our duty to eat and drink at the Lord's table; the more inexcusable therefore we, if we cannot be persuaded to come, when interest conspires with gratitude to enforce our duty upon us. I shewed under the first part, that this federal eating and drinking is expressive of a very great privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, as well as of an obligation incumbent upon him, *viz.* the favour and friendship of almighty God, together with all the blessings which can be supposed to flow from thence: and such a privilege as this must certainly greatly inlarge our obligations; our obligation to receive the Lord's supper, being invited thereto, and our obligation to walk worthy of it afterwards.—The Lord's supper is also of special advantage to promote a lively and devout remembrance of Christ, and thereby to invigorate our holy and heavenly affections, and to assist our progress in all virtue and goodness. That the remembrance of Christ by those that love him in sincerity, has naturally this good effect, will not be de-

nied by any such. Their love to Christ will be very much inflamed by considering the representation of his; and their desire of imitating the example of their Saviour, and standing compleat in his whole will, by their love to him.—Another obvious recommendation of this ordinance, is, the peculiar tendency it has to unite the hearts of Christians in brotherly kindness and charity. Cicero, taking notice of that endearment which was found among persons of the same family and kindred, gives this reason of it, *Magnum est enim habere eadem monumenta majorum*, &c. “It is no small matter to have the same monuments of our ancestors, the same sacrifices and religious ceremonies, and the same common sepulchres.” So here, and much more here than in the other case, “to have the same Master, the same Redeemer, the same sacred symbols by which they declare their common zeal for this divine person, their common interest in him, and their common relation one to another;” what an incentive, what an aid must it be to Christians, to *dwell together in unity*, and mutually to study and promote each others welfare and happiness!—And then the pleasure which rewards the conscientious observation of this command, as it carries its own recommenda-

tion in it, has this further advantage, that it strengthens our resolutions, animates our holy zeal, and renders the practice of all the other duties of religion more delightful. Communicating in the Lord's supper being thus advantageous, the obligation to communicate must be answerable: for the greater the advantages, the greater the motive; and the greater the motive to any duty, the more inexcusable must be the neglect of it.—Let this excite both non-communicants and communicants to reflect on their duty. Have I the prospect, if I receive worthily, of so much honour and advantage accruing to me, and shall I not be persuaded to come? should the non-communicant say. Since it is my happiness to partake of the memorials of Christ's body and blood, and of the pledges of his love, (should the communicant say), my resolution is to walk so as to please my Lord and Master, adorn his doctrine, and contribute in my little sphere to make the world entertain better thoughts both of the Master and of his disciples.

Such being the reasons (to which others might be added) which evince the obligations lying upon the disciples of Christ to communicate in the sacrament of his supper, so obvious and forcible; it may justly occasion some

surprize, how it comes to pass, that so great a part of the Christian world satisfy themselves in the neglect of this ordinance. I shall briefly examine the reasons of this.

1. The most general, and the leading reason, seems to be, a superstitious notion of the Lord's supper, which has too much prevailed in the Christian church, to the great detriment of it; and does still prevail, though I hope not so much as it has done. God grant it may wear out more and more, and that men may return to a sober judicious sense of the nature and design of this and every other part of our holy religion! Many Christians, with regard to the Lord's supper, seem to be in a condition like that of the Israelites at the giving of the law, when they saw mount Sinai burning with fire, and covered with blackness and tempest*; a sight so terrible that Moses said, *I exceedingly fear and quake; and heard the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which voice they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more*†. They could hardly be more afraid to approach the mountain, than some Christians are to come to the Lord's table; as if bounds were set about it, on purpose, as about mount Sinai, to keep off people; and they had the

* Exod. xix. 16.

† Heb. xii. 18, 19, 21.

same order as the people then had, *not to break through to come up to the Lord, lest he should break forth upon them.* They could scarcely more dread the voice of thunder, in which the law was delivered, than those timorous mistaken Christians do the command,—*Do this in remembrance of me;*—not considering, that they are come to mount Zion, not to mount Sinai; to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; through whom we have access by one Spirit to the Father almighty*; and surely then can have no just cause to fear approaching the Mediator himself, or rather the memorials of him at his table. Our Mediator is not so terrible, as to make us stand in need of another mediator in order to our coming before him with boldness; nay, *we are come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the law did,* being a confirmation of all the promises of the gospel: and what then should occasion, or what can justify such dreadful apprehensions of the Lord's supper, which may very well be called *superstitious*; as they are without all just ground; and have no other tendency than to enslave and debilitate the minds of Christians, to make them of a servile spirit, instead of inspiring a spirit of adoption, and cherishing the love of God and of Jesus, which is at once

* Eph. ii. 18.

the noblest, and the most delightful part of practical religion? It is not unlikely, that what chiefly gave rise to and spread this wrong notion of the holy supper, and made people advance it so much above the level of all other religious duties in respect of the solemnity, was the doctrine of transubstantiation, or the real corporeal presence, *i. e.* the change of the elements of bread and wine into the very body and blood of Christ, to which they were taught to pay a religious worship; and to eat what they worshipped, had certainly something more than solemn, even something horrible in it. And that which increased the superstitious veneration for this sacrament, was, the denying the cup to the laity; of this none but the priests, the ministers of the Lord, must have the privilege to partake. Thus the superstition may be supposed to have begun; and having taken possession of the minds of men, was not easily to be driven out again; not at the reformation itself, when the doctrines of Popery were banished out of Protestant churches, but too much of the spirit retained which was the consequence of those doctrines; and particularly this superstitious regard to the Lord's supper, which methinks Protestants should be the more willing to part with, upon the ac-

count of its Popish original. The Lord's supper is without all doubt a most solemn ordinance; and is it not a very solemn thing to draw nigh to God in any of the duties of divine worship? to God the greatest, most glorious and adorable Being? The solemnity of this sacrament principally depends upon that which is common to it with the ordinary parts of worship, *viz.* the addresses to God which accompany it, which carry something more solemn in them than the Lord's supper itself does, considered merely as a feast of commemoration instituted in honour of the great Friend and Saviour of mankind. It is true, this ordinance has in it, or attending it, all that is solemn in other ordinances, with something additional; I mean the manner of approaching God through the sacrifice of his Son represented by the visible memorials of it. But then this does not add so much to the solemnity of this religious action, as it does to the encouragement we have to *come with boldness to the throne of the heavenly grace; having not only a great High Priest passed into the heavens* *, but also the memorials of that sacrifice, by which he obtained the pardon of sin, acceptance with God, and eternal redemption for us. So that here is no

* Heb. iv. 14, 16.

room at all for a superstitious fear. Nor is the solemnity of this ordinance, any more than that of the other duties of religion, a reason why we should banish ourselves from it.

2. There are those who will say, They do not refuse, but only delay to come to the Lord's table. As there is no particular time of life fixed when they are first to receive the holy communion, they continue putting it off from time to time, and only wait for a more convenient opportunity of doing it. But when will that more convenient opportunity come? As to many, does not this excuse, poor as it is, serve them for years together? It is true, no exact time is limited, when our obligation to receive the Lord's supper begins to take place: but what then, if the nature of the command be such as to explain itself in this respect? as it certainly does; since the obligation to observe any command must commence as soon as persons have an ability, and can be made rationally sensible of the nature of the duty, and the advantages attending it, and that is when they are arrived to years of maturity, so as to be capable of serious consideration, of acting steadily in religion, and of serving God and celebrating the memory of their Saviour with understanding: and therefore I could wish, that

younger persons would take this matter into their deliberate thoughts: and do now earnestly intreat them, for their Saviour's sake, (of their obligations to whom I hope they are in some degree sensible), and for their own, to do it. I suppose them to be of age to judge and act for themselves; not only to discern good and evil, but to apprehend the great doctrines of Christianity, particularly that of *Christ being the Saviour of sinners, and only Mediator between God and man*; in memory of whom, and with a design more effectually to engage his disciples to love, imitate, and obey him, the sacrament of the supper was instituted: and what then should forbid their being received to, and receiving the holy communion, being before competently instructed in the nature and design of it, which I likewise suppose? Of the three great yearly festivals that were observed among the Jews by divine appointment, the passover corresponds very nearly to the Lord's supper under the Christian dispensation. The age when they made their first appearance at the celebration of this ordinance, the Jewish writers tell us, was at furthest when they were twelve or thirteen years old; which is rendered the more probable by what the Evangelist relates concerning our Saviour, that *his*

parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover, and when he was twelve years old, they carried him up with them, after the manner of the feast*. Certainly, as the work of our redemption by Jesus Christ is of a more signal nature, and much greater importance, than any of those temporal deliverances and favours which God vouchsafed to the Jewish church and nation, and for that reason deserves to be had in everlasting remembrance; so the way of commemorating it in the Lord's supper, with the intention of this ordinance, to promote a spirit of piety, and the practice of all goodness in the communicants, are things which young persons grown up to years of discretion, with a little reflection, may easily understand. And why then do not parents put those of their children who are soberly inclined, upon coming to the Lord's table sooner than is usual? I need not say I am now speaking of such parents as communicate themselves, for from others it cannot be expected. Why should not young persons, who have such a sufficient ripeness of judgment and sobriety of behaviour, be persuaded to reflect, and perform their duty in this respect? They will soon find the advantage and pleasure of it, in a

* Luke ii. 42, 42.

greater compofure of their paffions, a more exact regularity in their converfation, a better difpofition of mind for the performance of other duties; and more thought, and prudence, and fuccefs, by the bleffing of God, in the management of their common affairs. I fhould be better pleafed to fee more young perfons coming to the Lord's table, as they would hereby be good examples to older perfons, who are now only bad examples to them, and might perhaps make them afhamed of their delays: for, undoubtedly, whatever may be faid in excufe of younger perfons when they defire longer time; fuch who are almoft come to the middle part of life, or paff it, it may be in the decline of it, can have nothing to plead for themfelves; they cannot pretend that they are not of age fufficient for the thing to which they are preffed, nor with any grace talk of delaying yet longer who have delayed much too long already. For God's fake, therefore, and as they regard their duty to their Lord and Redeemer, and the profperity of their own fouls, let them not thus egregioufly impofe upon themfelves any longer. One would imagine that it was fomething exceeding grievous and burthenfome that they were exhorted to perform, that they are thus con-

tinually putting it off; when it is to do nothing else, but what their own sense of duty and a principle of ingenuity, gratitude, and self-interest, should not suffer them to be easy in omitting, though they were never pressed to it. How long do they intend to go on thus? till death overtakes them while they are thus delaying, cuts off their trifling purposes; and so they appear before their Saviour and great Judge, without having once shewn forth his death according to his most express command?

3. The plea of great numbers is, That they are not fit to partake of this holy supper. Why so? Are they scandalous sinners? do they live in a constant known violation of the precepts of the gospel? If this be the case, I will allow that they are not qualified to approach the Lord's table; and that no man can receive worthily, who lives in habitual wickedness, both before and after, and so goes on alternately attending upon his devotions and his vices. We will suppose a notorious habitual sinner to receive the sacrament; nay, and that he sincerely intends the action in honour of Christ as his Lord and Master, and purposes future amendment at the time of performing it: yea so far is such a purpose as this from making a man a

worthy receiver, as things appear to me, that one of this character cannot pray worthily; for how can those desires and resolutions be in any proper sense worthy of, or suitable to the duty performed, which are so imperfect as to be without effect, not now and then only, but always? And though a man had better pray with such feeble desires than not at all, it will not follow, that he had better come to the sacrament too, than delay it till he has given some signs of his repentance in his life and conversation. Prayer is a natural and universal means of piety and virtue; in the total neglect of which it is impossible a man should be actually good; and next to impossible, that he should be in the way to become so: which cannot be said of the Lord's supper; this being a positive institution. Hath a man been guilty of drunkenness, murder, adultery, or any other the most flagitious crimes? He cannot do better than immediately cast himself down in the presence of God, confessing his sin, humbling himself for it, imploring mercy, and the like: but surely no one would think it right, to go from the commission of such crimes to the Lord's table. Not to speak of secret or family prayer; there is not that scandal to the Christian society, in admitting notorious

sinners to mingle in the public prayers of the church, as in permitting not to say inviting, them to come to the Lord's supper. Eating and drinking are directly and particularly the acts of every communicant, acts distinguishing of the Christian society, and a mark of friendship between the Master and his disciples: in all which respects this duty differs from prayer; which in its very nature suits the condition of a sinner; and in which therefore he may be allowed to join without offence, if he behave decently during the worship. And therefore, upon the whole, I think such persons are in the right to stay away from the Lord's supper, till they are better disposed to make a proper use of it, and have given some proof of this disposition to themselves and others. But then a vicious life, for which no excuse is to be given in any man, and least of all in a Christian, can be no excuse for the omission of a plain duty; an omission, which, instead of having its guilt extenuated by this plea, is a very great aggravation of the guilt of a wicked life, which is the occasion of it. They should rather therefore argue thus——
“ I at present lead such a life, as I can neither reconcile with the rules of the Christian religion, nor with a reasonable hope

“ of an interest in the promises and blessings of it: I will therefore immediately quit the guilty, the dangerous way I am in; and then, as I shall be prepared for death, which I have now the greatest reason to dread the thoughts of, especially considering that there is not a moment when it may not surprise me, so I shall be qualified to shew my gratitude to my Saviour, by joining with his disciples in the commemoration of his death and sufferings, and the participation of all the fruits and benefits of them.”——So much for those whose character is known to be vicious by themselves and others.

Shall we, therefore, encourage none to come but those who are assured of their being in a state of favour with God, sanctified and pardoned; or who have very good reason to think so, and are troubled with very few doubts about it? This, I take it, would be an extreme on the other hand. If persons live so as not to discredit their Christian profession; if they have good dispositions, which they in some measure cultivate and improve, though it should be doubtful whether they are prevailing; I cannot see that they have a sufficient cause for absenting themselves from the sacrament; which might

be of admirable service to fortify their holy resolutions, and to invigorate their pious affections; particularly their love to Christ, which they are conscious to their having in some degree, as likewise of its not being without all effect. And though it should really be so that they are not thorough converts, and the love of God and of Jesus has not yet gotten the entire mastery over their other passions; yet I can by no means think, that those words of the Apostle Paul do at all belong to them, that *he who eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body**. Besides observing that the original word translated *damnation*, might, and ought to have been rendered by *judgment*, meaning some temporal judgment, which is a much softer one; it is enough to show, that such as I am speaking of, do not fall under the weight of St. Paul's censure; forasmuch as they *discern the Lord's body*, putting a very great difference betwixt that and their common meals, and having a very sincere desire to honour their Saviour, and to be in favour with him; which they testify, by bringing forth many, if not all the fruits of righteousness, in some degree, though not in so great a degree as they should.

* 1 Cor. xi. 29.

And the more fully to remove all doubt in this matter, I shall briefly consider the irregularity of the Corinthians, noted by St. Paul: *When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper: for in eating every one taketh before other, his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken* *. The question here is, Whether this relates to the Lord's supper itself; or to the *agapæ*, i. e. the *love-feasts*, which used to accompany it in the primitive times; or to some other entertainment, which, of their own fancy, these irregular Corinthians held before they proceeded to partake of the sacrament? One can hardly conceive, that it was at the Lord's supper itself they behaved in this indecent manner; since they could not but know, that all belonging to that was only bread and wine; whereas here some of them seemed to have eaten as well as drunk to excess. Why else is it said, *One is hungry, another is drunken*, if the term *drunken* was not designed to comprehend excesses of both kinds in eating as well as drinking? And then again, the Lord's supper being a feast of which all in common were to partake in memory of their Saviour, it is not very credible, that some would not only take this supper before others, but without any care

* 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21.

that the poor should have wherewithal to keep the feast. As to the *agapæ*, or *love-feasts*, it is most probable from *antiquity**, that they were not celebrated till after the Lord's supper; and being feasts of charity, the very nature of them will not admit of our supposing that the poor were excluded from them. The most likely way of solving the difficulty seems to me to be this, that the Corinthians of their own heads made the Lord's supper an appendix or second entertainment to another feast, in order to conform it to the manner of communicating at the first institution, which was at the close of the passover. Socrates†, in his ecclesiastical history, mentions some Egyptians living near Alexandria, who partook of the sacrament in a different manner from what was usual in the Christian church; making merry, and filling themselves with all sorts of food; and then in the evening, after this, partaking of the sacrament; which he calls *mysteries*. This looks so much like a parallel instance, that we may very well suppose the practice of the Corinthians condemned by St. Paul, to have been the same

* See Plin. l. 10. ep. 97. and Tertul. Apol. c. 39.

† Lib. 5. c. 22.

with that of these Egyptians. And the Apostle might very well say, that *this was not to eat the Lord's supper*: for the ultimate design of their meeting together being to partake of the Lord's supper, to which the other feast was only introductory; as it showed no great respect to the Lord's supper, or knowledge of the nature of it, to behave so at the feast connected with it; so by the excesses they were guilty of, aggravated by their uncommunicativeness to the poor members of the church, they put themselves into a condition, in which they could not possibly *discern* as they ought the *Lord's body*. This was *eating and drinking unworthily* in the most notorious manner. But what has this to do with their case, or how can they be affected by the Apostle's censure, who come in a sober and reverent manner, and with a sincere desire and purpose to walk worthy of this sacrament, and of all the other parts of the Christian religion; though it may be they are not so perfect in their conformity to the gospel, and so thoroughly confirmed in their good resolutions and dispositions, as they should be, and perhaps are in a way to become? And therefore the objection of unfitness is easily and sufficiently answered. I would conclude this head with this reflection,

That communicants of a sober and regular behaviour, may, by what has been now offered, be more fully satisfied in what they have done in coming to the Lord's table, so as to be freed from any scruples they may have been troubled with upon this account; and not only so, but may rejoice in their having chosen this good part, for so doubtless it is. " Instead of giving way to a *spirit of bondage again to fear*, think, O my soul, of the duty which thou hast before thee, and in the omission of which thou didst wisely resolve not to allow thyself, and of the advantages annexed to the conscientious discharge of it; and with equal diligence and chearfulness, joined with earnest prayer to God for his assistance, apply thy mind and heart to the devout commemoration of thy once dying and dead, but now risen, exalted, ever-living, and affectionate Lord!"

4. Others urge their being involved in so much business, as not to be able to spend the time necessary by way of preparation for the sacrament. But the question is, Whether the multiplicity of their business be what they cannot well avoid? If it be their own fault, that their time is so much taken up with the world; instead of making their worldly cares

a pretence for their absenting themselves from the Lord's table, they should immediately set themselves to retrench these cares, and thereby cut off this occasion of their neglecting a plain duty of religion: and so without all doubt they would, if it was really their desire to have all hindrances removed out of their way in order to their partaking of this gospel-feast. If their being engaged in a great deal of business is not the effect of choice, but necessity, and they would willingly, if they could, shake off this and every other incumbrance; they have no manner of reason to banish themselves from any ordinance of the gospel upon this account. Because their hands are full of the world on the week-day, they do not therefore, when the Lord's day returns, refuse to join in the stated duties of it: and why should they deprive themselves of the privilege of communicating in the Lord's supper, any more than of performing the other parts of divine worship; or think themselves unqualified for one, any more than for the other? It is to be hoped, whenever they come to the house of God, and unite in prayers to God, or in hearing his most holy word, they labour to discharge their hearts of every foreign care, that *they may attend*

upon the Lord without distraction *. And having laid aside the thoughts of all earthly things, they might as well receive the Lord's supper, as engage in any other religious duty, if there be nothing else to prevent it, but their being taken up more than they desire with the affairs of this life at other times. But by this means they are not able to devote the requisite time to the duties of preparation. To which it may be replied, That what we call preparation for the sacrament being only a prudential thing, no where enjoined in the word of God, must not be looked upon as absolutely necessary, much less the spending such an exact portion of time in the exercises of devotion. Let us employ what time we can command, and find by experience to be of use to this purpose; and we have nothing further to trouble ourselves about, but putting our hearts in the best order we can, and so moderating our affections to all these sublunary things, that as often as we are called to any duty, we may be in a proper disposition for the performance of it. Let us do this, and we need not doubt of our being acceptable guests at the table of the Lord.

5. The last hindrance I shall mention to

* 1 Cor. vii. 35.

mens coming to the table of the Lord, and which I fear is the most common, is, That persons apprehend, that the sacrament will oblige them to greater strictness of conversation than they should otherwise be bound to observe, or shall be able to make good, and by that means increase their guilt; and that therefore they had better, for their own safety, continue to absent themselves. But let me take the liberty to tell them, that this is such a sort of reason as they would not satisfy themselves with in any other case where their affections were engaged. Do not they know, that whatever blessing they enjoy, temporal or spiritual, their obligation to serve and glorify God is thereby rendered the greater? Are they not under stronger obligations to a holy life for being Christians, than if they were Heathens; Protestants, than if they had been trained up in the darkness of Popery? But if it was in their choice, would they therefore change conditions with Papists or Heathens? Surely no; because they know, though perhaps they do not consider it as they should, that their advantages are far beyond those of the other, and cannot be sufficiently prized. Do they not likewise know, that any superior degree of learning, or riches, or power, is a talent for which they are ac-

countable to the Governor and Judge of the world, and which calls for higher degrees of gratitude to God, and, as the consequence of that, of activity and diligence in his service; so that, if possessing so much greater abilities than others, they yet do not more good than they, or not so much, they will be left inexcusable? But, notwithstanding this, do they chuse to be ignorant, and poor, and disregarded, that they may have the less account to give at last? It is certain, from universal experience that they do not. And why then should the present be the only excepted case, in which they deny themselves a most invaluable privilege, only that they may not be so strongly obliged to a regular and Christian conversation? To such a conversation they are obliged by their profession of Christianity, whether they are communicants or no; to an observation of the self-same duties and virtues, and an abstinence from the same vices, as they value the favour of their God and their Saviour, and their own everlasting happiness; and let me add, are under the greater obligations to it, for having the opportunities of coming to the Lord's table, whether they make use of these opportunities or not. It is not only actually receiving the Lord's supper, but their being commanded, invited, and encouraged to

receive it, that they are to give an account of. Nor is their privilege the less, nor consequently their obligation to be thankful for it, because they neglect to make any advantage of it; on the contrary, so much the greater is their guilt, and their folly. They are obliged to practise nothing after the sacrament, but what they were before obliged to, if they would enter into the kingdom of heaven; and to abstain from no indulgencies but those which, by the gospel-constitution, will exclude us from thence. Their fancy therefore of securing to themselves a greater liberty, by absenting from the Lord's table, is very foolish. They are still talking of the danger of partaking of the Lord's supper, and not walking worthy of it; in the mean-while forgetting, that a sinful life will be their ruin, though they never communicate; and that there is a danger as great, or rather greater, on the other side; I mean, in habitually neglecting a plain institution of the gospel. To which let us further add, that if our obligation to walk circumspectly is greater after we have received the sacrament, our helps, and encouragements, and pleasures, are greater too; and that therefore, upon the whole, we can have no good reason, upon any such account as this, to refuse another invitation to the Lord's table,

which I now give you in the name of my great Master and yours.

To conclude,—The institution of the supper, and the peculiar nature and design of it, have been explained, the obligations lying on the disciples of Christ to communicate in this sacrament shewn, and the most plausible objections against it answered: and I would fain hope, that all this will not be without some good effect, both with regard to the judgment and the affections of my reader; helping to give him a distincter notion of this part of his religion, the wisdom and the design of the institution; to convince him, that it is equally his duty and his advantage to observe it; and to produce in him, in concurrence with his own serious consideration, and the grace of God, all those good dispositions which the remembrance of Christ requires, and is so well fitted to strengthen and perfect. Whatever defects there have been in the manner of handling this subject, yet I will take the liberty to say, it must be the reader's own fault, if he is nothing at all the better for what has been laid before him. Enough, I am persuaded, has been offered to gain the assent of any impartial person; and, if seriously considered, to prevail with all to devote themselves to God and to the Redeemer, to

love them more fervently, and to serve them more diligently and faithfully. God grant our communions may be more numerous, and communicants more eminent and exemplary for every Christian virtue! The Lord's supper is undoubtedly a most excellent institution; and were it but improved as it ought, would appear to be so to the conviction of the whole world. Would to God that all those, who, in obedience to the command of their Master, eat and drink at his table in remembrance of him, would duly consider this; taking care to behave at all times suitably to the dignity of their character, the solemn nature of their vows and engagements, and the greatness of their obligations. Then would others, *seeing their good works, glorify their Father who is in heaven*; and not be easy till they had joined with them in celebrating the memory of our common Lord and Saviour; saying, "Come, and let us also go to this feast, " and at once honour Christ, and promote, " as they have done, our edification in holiness and comfort:" then would the church of Christ be more glorious and beautiful, and his religion a source of more abounding and more permanent pleasure and satisfaction: then, in a word, as the excellence and usefulness of all the commandments and institu-

tions of the gospel would be evident, so particularly of the Lord's supper; for which we should esteem ourselves obliged to praise God, as in it we do for his wonderful goodness to the children of men.

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES

RELATING TO THE

LORD'S SUPPER, before, or preparatory
to receiving.

To the READER.

THE author's design in this little present which he makes the public, is not to confine and fetter the devotion of pious communicants, but assist it, by furnishing them with materials for meditation, which they may have always at hand, to make use of when and in what manner they judge convenient. Souls the best turned for the exercises of the spiritual life, have not at all times the same happy flow of thought, or liveliness of affection; and when this is the case, that their usual activity fails them, who can tell but they may find something or other here which may help to rouse their attention, to lead them into a train of thinking, and so fan the sacred fire, that it may burn the more brightly? And if this may be supposed of these superior souls, much more of those in lower classes. As devotion, true enlightened devotion, is one of the most sublime, and, withal, most delightful and useful attainments of the human mind, being not only a very

great support and refreshment to it, a sort of heavenly music in the house of its pilgrimage, but a considerable help to the most animated practice of all virtue and goodness; I shall esteem myself not a little happy to contribute in any degree to the spreading, or the exercise and improvement of so excellent a disposition. I have sincerely attempted it; and have nothing further I can do, but to commend what follows to the blessing of God, and the reader's candid and serious perusal. Farewel.

H. G.

S E C T. I.

NOW, O my soul, that thou art retired from the world, let me ask thee, as in the presence of the all-knowing God, Hast thou ever seriously considered thy nature, thy interest, and thy dangers? that thou art a spiritual being, reasonable and immortal, capable of other and nobler pleasures than thou receivest from the enjoyments of the world, and by the instrumentality of the body, of a higher and more permanent felicity than falls within the limits of this transitory life; and that, without a great deal of thought and care, thou art liable to be excluded from all title to this, which is thy pro-

per portion, and, at the same time deprived of all those inferior good things, which thou art too apt to mistake for it, and to place in the room of it; instead of attaining happiness, the thing thou art seeking after, to fall into a state of misery, from which there is no hope of rising again? Hast thou considered, O my soul, what the Son of God hath done to awaken thee out of the common lethargy, to cure thee of thy blindness, to purchase happiness for thee, and to direct, assist, and animate thee in the pursuit of it? Acknowledge, O my soul, the infinite obligations, under God, the first mover, to the Redeemer of mankind, the great lover of souls; who, to ransom them from the evils they suffered, or were exposed to, and to raise them to the highest degrees of perfection and blessedness their nature and faculties would admit of, came down from the bosom of the Father into this sinful world, clothed himself with human flesh, and human infirmities, taught the most excellent doctrine, enforced it by the most perfect example, and the most precious and divine promises, and freely seals it with his own blood, which we are taught to regard not only as the blood of a martyr, but an atoning sacrifice; who established a church, or society of faithful persons, and took care

that nothing should be wanting for its preservation in the world, and continual edification in faith, and holiness, and charity, and consolation! And canst thou deny any thing to such a friend, such a benefactor as Jesus hath been to thee? When he hath provided thee with all the means and assistances thou needest, in order to thy going on to perfection, among others, with the institution of the holy supper, shouldst thou not thankfully accept, and faithfully improve them? O my soul, resolve, and let nothing turn thee from thy purpose, that the serving and imitating thy Saviour, and preparing thyself for that blessed immortality which he hath procured for, and revealed and promised to thee, shall be thy chief aim, thy constant employment, during the rest of thy pilgrimage upon earth!

S E C T. II.

BUT what is it, O my soul, that thy Saviour requires of thee! I hear him saying—*Do this in remembrance of me.*—But what is it that he would have us do? Is it to make ourselves of no reputation, and become poor for his sake, as he did for ours; to renounce every thing that this life hath in it

most valuable and pleasant; to afflict the body with painful and useless austerities; and to retreat from all the affairs and conversation of the world, into barren deserts and frightful solitudes? No such thing; though, had he bid thee give him some such severe proofs of thy remembrance of him as these, thou couldst not in gratitude have refused them: how much more, when he only enjoins thee, in a religious manner, to make use of bread and wine as sacramental memorials of his body broken, and his blood shed for us! How easy the command! and how inexcusable those who, calling themselves the disciples of Christ, will not, through some fault of their own be persuaded to do as they are commanded, or do it negligently and indevoutly! Hast thou never heard and admired at the cruelties which the worshippers of false gods, not only voluntarily, but with a sort of pride, have practised upon themselves, in honour of dumb idols? Thy merciful Lord calls for no such test of thy love to him. He makes this indeed a necessary qualification for thy being his disciple, as it is in the nature of the thing, that thou keep his commandments: but either thou knowest not what his commandments are, or must be obliged to own that they are not grievous. That I love my fellow-disci-

ples, and cultivate a benevolent disposition towards all mankind; that I be humble, meek, merciful, temperate; that I be not anxiously thoughtful about future time and events, lay not up for myself a treasure on earth, but in heaven, that my treasure being there, my heart may be there also: these, and such like, are the commands of the blessed Jesus; who, as a means admirably adapted to my delightful progress in these and all other virtues of the Christian life, does further injoin a devout attendance at his table, there to receive the pledges of his love, and grace to help in every time of need.

S E C T. III.

MUST thou not acknowledge, O my soul, that thy Redeemer's yoke is easy, and his burden light, if thou reflect, that, instead of those numerous rites and ceremonies which the Mosaic law appointed, and which rendered that service so burdensome, that an Apostle of Christ scruples not to call it *a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear*; the Christian church hath no other observances of a ritual nature, but those two simple and easy ones, (easy to be understood,

M

and as easy to be practised), of baptism, and the Lord's supper; and that of these two the latter is only intended to be repeated? So little does our divine Master delight in abridging his followers of any liberty they can reasonably desire; and so much is he concerned that their duty should be their pleasure, or a natural source of it. The things recommended, and most strongly insisted on, by his gospel, are those weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God; things intrinsically good and amiable. And to the honour of this sacrament of the supper it may be observed, that, though a positive institution, yet, to those who receive it in a right manner, it is of unspeakable use to promote the life of God in the soul, and the practice of all those virtues by which we resemble God in the conversation. Wherefore, O my soul, instead of being influenced by any objections of weak, or ill-designing men, against the institution itself, or any trifling excuses that may tempt thee to neglect the observation of it, or vain terrors which would rob thee of the pleasure it was designed to afford thee; with all readiness obey the invitation to this sacred feast, and with all gladness of heart set thyself to celebrate the love of thy Saviour in it!

S E C T. IV.

NOR ask why Christ would have us eat and drink in memory of him, when we could remember him without any such ceremony. Confess, O my soul, obliged as thou art, to have thy Saviour perpetually in mind! hast thou not found it too easy and common a thing for thee to forget him, to lose thyself and the thoughts of an absent Saviour amidst the cares, or amusements and delights of this vain world? It is not what thou shouldst do, is the question. Thou shouldst, there is no doubt, be ever looking unto Jesus, and embrace every opportunity of conversing with him in thy thoughts and meditations, without any other monitor or prompter than a grateful heart. This thou shouldst do. But is it thus thou wouldst act, if left entirely to thy own discretion and choice? Record this, O my soul, among the instances of the kind and tender care of thy Redeemer, that he calls thee off from the pursuit of the world, hath made it thy duty to dismiss thy meaner passions, and, in the absence of these, to commemorate him in this solemn manner, and by these external signs; that thou mightst have thy thoughts of him better fixed, and

thy affections more powerfully actuated and enlivened; and by this means be disposed more naturally to remember him at other times, and in the ordinary course of thy life! From this sacramental transaction, frequently and rightly performed, will proceed such a strong attachment to thy Saviour, such a prevailing bent in thy inclinations, as will make it next to impossible for thee to live in an habitual forgetfulness of that Jesus, whose dying love, with unfeigned zeal and gratitude, thou hast so often shewed forth in his supper; he will dwell in thy heart by faith, have the possession of all thy faculties, be precious in thy esteem, and dear to thy memory. And then further, attend to this as a consideration of no small weight, that the remembrance of Christ in the holy communion, is not a private and solitary act, but of a public nature; a declaration of the faith of the Christian church, and of the high veneration it hath for a crucified Saviour; and so is better fitted to do honour to his memory, and, as an everlasting monument to spread and perpetuate it in the world. And surely, O my soul, this must be a very great recommendation of this ordinance to thee, and to all the faithful in Christ, that, by publicly and constantly attending upon it, every one of you in some

degree helps to support the memory of your great Redeemer among men! Would not every one that remembers Christ himself, have others to remember him too? Would he not have his love dwell in the hearts, and his name upon the tongues of all men? And the little he can do to this end, must he not do, and be exceeding glad if he could do more?

S E C T. V.

THINK again, O my soul, with what view our gracious Redeemer obliges us to remember him! He had some design in demanding this of his followers, especially in appointing such a form of commemoration. Did this design regard himself, or us? Was it for his own sake, or for ours, that he appears so desirous of living in our remembrance? for the honour that will redound to him, or the benefit and consolation that we shall receive from hence? For our sakes, no doubt, was this intended; not properly for his own, who can gain nothing by us, and hath a dignity and greatness inherent in him, that exalts him far above all the motives of vain glory. How trifling and contemptible is the honour of having his name

recorded by us, the offspring of the dust, and transmitted down from one generation of short-lived creatures to another, when the angels, those sons of light, surround him with their adoring multitudes, and make his praises the subject of their immortal songs! But this is the honour he covets, the joy for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, to bring many sons unto glory, to restore as great numbers as he can out of the ruins of the fallen race, to train them up in the paths of virtue and holiness, and then, the proper time being for it come, to bestow immortality upon them. For this end he calls upon thee to, remember him. It is thy advantage he proposes; and great, unspeakably great, is the privilege accruing from this duty, if thou knowest how to improve it. And to thy improvement of it nothing more is necessary than sincerity on thy part; inasmuch as God will never fail to assist all those with the quickening influences of his grace and spirit, who do their best; and will accept their weak, because well-meant, endeavours to please him, through the mediation of his well-beloved Son; whose meritorious death and passion is represented to them, and remembered by them, in this ordinance.

S E C T. VI.

BE this then, O my soul, thy great, thy only concern, to be approved of thy God and Saviour; to come with enlightened views, with fervent desires, and holy dispositions; and to be found a worthy, that thou mayest be a welcome guest! For thou canst not think, O my soul, that it is alike indifferent with what temper thou makest thy approaches to this sacred festival! Does the pious Psalmist, even under the legal dispensation, when there was so much outward pomp and ceremony in the worship of God, lay such stress on inward purity, and moral goodness and rectitude? does he beg of God to examine and prove him, to try his reins and his heart; and make his appeal to him, as having walked in his integrity, and had his loving-kindness before his eyes; and then resolve, *I will wash my hands in innocence, so will I compass thine altar, O Lord?* and is less regard had to the qualification of the worshipper, where the worship is more refined and spiritual? Was it a more solemn thing to attend the sacrifice of a slain beast, than it is to commemorate the sacrifice of the Son of God? But how shall I, who am

but sinful dust and ashes, come before the Lord? how present myself among the adorers of the most high God? He hath shewed thee, O my soul, what he requires of thee! Examine thyself, both as to thy notions of the duty before thee, the nature and the design of it, and as to thy fitness to partake of so high a privilege. Lay the foundation of faithfulness to God and man, to thy Master, and to thy fellow-disciples, in being faithful and true to thyself. Diligently search thy memory, and see what the general course of thy life hath been, and whether there are not some particular great transgressions for which thou hast not yet been so thoroughly humbled as thou shouldst; descend into thy heart, and, if there be any favourite lust, any unmortified habit of vice that lurks there, desist not from thy inquiries till thou hast found it; and, having found it, drag it into the light, shame thyself for it, and spare it not. For, alas, what will it avail thee to deceive thyself, when God is not mocked? The delusion may please and flatter, and, while it lasts, fill thee with towering imaginations, confident hopes, and strange overflowings of joy, especially at the holy table, from a false apprehension that all the benefits enjoyed by the true disciples of Jesus are thine.

But how short-lived must the peace, the pleasure, the hope be, which is all fallacious and groundless! Thy pleasures will only resemble flashes of lightning in a dark night; which cause a momentary brightness, but presently vanishing, give additional horrors to the remaining darkness. Hast thou, after fairly and fully debating it, already settled this grand point? Take the comfort of thy sincerity; and doubt not of a free and kind admission by the Master of the feast to his table. However, do not therefore immediately conclude all further examination and preparation needless. Hast thou not been too indulgent in some things? too deficient in others? Has not some bad temper grown upon thee? some passion broke its bounds? A spirit of pride, or sensuality, or worldliness, or indifference to the welfare and happiness of others, though it does not reign in thee, yet recovered too much power? Humbly and earnestly intreat forgiveness for it, and strength against it; beg of God, the Father of spirits, to restore thee from thy wanderings; put all things into the best order thou art able thyself; and steadfastly resolve not to allow thyself in any temper, or degree of any temper, in any action, or omission of any action, which the gospel does not allow thee in.

S E C T. VII.

LET me consider, O my soul, this is but one among many religious duties which I am to perform with the same seriousness and sincerity I do this! Whenever I worship God, whether in public or private, as I hope to do it acceptably, I am to cleanse my hands before I draw nigh unto him, and to discharge my heart of every foreign care; that so I may be able to attend upon God without distraction, and have my mind possessed with a holy awe of the divine Majesty. Let me not set one duty above another; nor, by the preparation I make for the Lord's supper, be tempted to think I may be more careless and negligent in the ordinary exercises of religion. The preparation of the heart is always necessary, when we take upon us to speak to the great Lord of heaven and earth: and if, by way of introduction to any particular ordinance, as this of the Lord's supper, it be usual to spend more time in self-recollection and other exercises of devout retirement, to the intent we may have our hearts set in order, and all things in a readiness against the approaching season; the foundation of this practice seems to be, that

it is proper to do this sometimes; and no time is reckoned more proper for such a work, than before receiving the Lord's supper; as that ordinance is not wont to revolve so often as the stated worship of the Lord's day, and the nature of the institution is more entirely and distinguishingly evangelical, or Christian. Upon this account, as I shall not make it an indispensable rule to have the very same set preparation every time I receive the sacrament, whether necessary or not necessary, convenient or not convenient, nor banish myself from the Lord's table when I have not an opportunity for it, (since this would be to bind myself where God hath left me free); so, as often and as far as I find it expedient, I shall commune with my own heart, and endeavour to awaken and raise my spirit by previous exercises, before I enter upon the common duties of divine worship; and shall always charge my soul not to rush into the presence of God in an irreverent and indevout manner, lest I draw down his displeasure upon me at the very time I profess to honour his name.

S E C T. VIII.

DO I not love thee, O my Saviour? I humbly trust I can say, Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee. Either I am a stranger to my own heart, and ignorant after what objects it breathes and aspires, or I unfeignedly, I prevailingly love thee. Art thou the darling of thine almighty Father, his chief delight? And art thou not mine? Does not my soul follow hard after thee; prefer thy friendship to that of the whole world; esteem all those marks and traces of thine image, which prove my relation to thee, and interest in thee, more than the peculiar treasure of kings? Does it not ardently desire to be better acquainted with thee, according to the discoveries that are made of thee in the gospel? Would not all the pleasures and entertainments of life be insipid, and even tiresome, without thee? To be with thee, would not my soul willingly quit the body, even this moment, didst thou call her, and she were assured that her separation from all things here below would be followed with a nearer union with thee? I love thee, O Jesus; but not as I would, not as I ought to love thee! When I think

of thy personal excellencies, thy condescensions, thy sufferings, thy death, and the glorious fruits of them; I am not able to conceive, much less describe, the love I owe thee. I can only say in general, that my love should have no other bounds than the capacity of my heart; I should love thee as much as I can love thee, and thus it is I would love thee. O let thy love kindle mine; let it mount into a flame; let this flame consume every visionary idol: that usurps any part of the honour due to my Saviour; let it enliven every power, direct and consecrate every thought, every affection, every design; let me, and all I possess, be a sacrifice of love; to thee I devote it all, through whom all things are mine, and who art more than all other things can possibly be to me!

S E C T. IX.

WHAT abundant reason, O most blessed Saviour, have I to rejoice and be glad in thee! In thee I have determined to rejoice always; in the contemplation of thy person, thy gospel, thy -virtues, thy conquests, and thy glory, and even in thy crosses; in all the great things thou hast done for us,

N

and we already enjoy; and in the much greater thou hast promised, and we yet further wait for. I will heighten the common pleasures of this life by my joy in thee; and, by rejoicing in thee under all the evils and troubles of it, will learn to forget or make light of them all, and to weep as if I wept not. Thou art my sanctuary and my hope. Here I take refuge when pursued by my griefs, and doubts, and fears; even in thee, and the several ways I have of conversing with thee. O Jesus, thou givest light to those that are in darkness, strength to the weak, rest to the weary, and comfort to the distressed! O my Saviour, as nothing is wanting in the way of assistance and encouragement on thy part, I hope less shall be wanting on mine than hath hitherto been, in returns of praise, and service, and obedience, for the unsearchable riches of thy goodness!

S E C T. X.

TELL me, O thou whom my soul loveth, my Saviour and my Lord, how I shall best express my thanks to thee, among the other testimonies of thy regard to my happiness, for this wise, this kind institution of the

supper; which, together with the legacy of peace, as nearly related to, and closely linked with it, thou hast bequeathed to thy church! I am very sensible, that living in the neglect of this ordinance would not shew my thankfulness for it; and have therefore determined to go, not only to the house of God with the multitude of them that keep holy thy day, but with the smaller number that delight to honour thee at thy table. And, to let the world see I am not submitting to a disagreeable task, which I would gladly be excused from did I know how to find an evasion, I will go with a holy alacrity; and shall not be sorry to have the joy of my heart shine out in the light and serenity of my countenance, so there be no appearance of affectation in it. Draw me, O my Saviour, by the bands of love! Thou hast thus drawn me, and I feel the sweet constraint! O thou bright Morning-star, irradiate the region of my soul with thy heavenly beams! Thou hast done it, and I bless the sacred influence! O my most worthy Advocate and Intercessor, as there is no coming unto the Father but by thee, so by thee it is I make my addresses; and in thy mediation, under the goodness and mercy of God, I place my trust! Present me to the divine Majesty, and plead with him for me in virtue of thy

atoning sacrifice, and obedience unto death. Thou dost continually discharge this friendly office for all the sincerely penitent and faithful; and in this confidence I humbly offer up these my supplications to the Father of lights, and the Father of mercies.

A P R A Y E R.

O Thou infinite and eternal Majesty! the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in heaven; vouchsafe, with an eye of favour and compassion, to behold thy sinful creature, who now falls prostrate before thee, in humble adoration of thy distinguishing and most undeserved goodness to the children of men, and to me in particular, which I acknowledge to have been such as beyond measure to inhanche the guilt of my offences against thee. With what sincerity, O Lord, thou desirest the conversion of sinners, the prosperity of thy saints, and the happiness of all that are upright in heart, thou hast abundantly discovered in the incarnation and death of thy well-beloved Son our most worthy Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ; and in the rich variety of means which thou hast kindly provided for the healing the manifold disorders of our nature, and our continual

progress towards perfection! As for all these I bless and praise thy wise goodness; so, in a particular manner and not least of all, for the institution of the holy supper; which coming recommended by the authority of my blessed Saviour, and bearing his name, as it was appointed in honour of his memory, I desire ever to set a very high value upon. Being not only allowed, but invited, to attend this sacred feast, I joyfully accept the invitation; humbly trusting, that thy grace hath made me in some degree meet to partake of so invaluable a privilege; and intreating thee, that what is further wanting, in order to my communicating with yet greater advantage and acceptance, the same grace may supply. O let the blood of Jesus thy Son cleanse me from all sin; and his Spirit, even that eternal Spirit, through which he offered himself without spot unto God, enlighten, sanctify, and raise my spirit, naturally dark, depressed, and polluted! Give me understanding in all thy precepts; and help me to discern the meaning, and to attain the ends of that holy ordinance for which I am preparing. Let the sacred fire, falling from heaven, consume my drossy affections, and kindle a flame of divine love in my breast, never to be extinguished. Grant, O Lord, that I may approach with

the deepest sense of my own meanness, unworthiness, and guilt; and with the most exalted apprehensions of thy holiness and mercy, both which thou hast so wonderfully displayed in the method of our redemption by Jesus Christ: that I may receive the pledges of thy forgiving love, and the memorials of my Saviour's bloody, passion, with a lively faith, an abounding hope, with gratitude unfeigned, and joy unspeakable: and may so feel the attractive influence of his example, the efficacy of his death, and the power of his resurrection, that I may have my whole soul transformed into love; be all kindness and charity to men, and zeal for God and Jesus; may die unto sin, and live unto righteousness; be able to tread on all the power of the enemy; to deny myself, despise the blandishments and temptations of the world; have my conversation in heaven, and overcome all opposition in the way to it; and, finally, after having loved, and served, and followed my Saviour without seeing him, may be with him, according to his own prayer, where he is, to behold his glory; and, with all the heavenly multitudes, ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!

At the LORD'S TABLE.

S E C T. I.

O My soul, the happy, the wished-for time is come, but will quickly be gone again! Lay hold of the opportunity, make the utmost advantage of it, that, when past and gone, it may not be lost. Turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity, and look unto Jesus. Be all attention and reverence, thy thoughts united and elevated, every power engaged, and all thy affections present to wait on thy Lord, and minister to him at his table.

S E C T. II.

AND O thou, who alone knowest the hearts of all men, and alone hast them in thy power, the almighty and omnipotent God! help thou mine infirmities; fix my mine, prone else to wander; cause every good seed thy hand hath sown to spring up; perfect thine own work; speak peace to my soul; bid every vain and every tumultuous passion be still: the sacrifice is ready, send down the sacred fire, and help me in the same act to honour the Father and the Son, that I may have fellowship with both!

S E C T. III.

BEhold, my soul, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world! Rightly is he called *a Lamb*, whose innocence was spotless, and his meekness and patience invincible; and *the Lamb of God*, for his superior excellence and dignity, and his being chosen to this office by the Father. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth; neither guile or complaint was found in his mouth, much less cursing and bitterness. Dost thou profess thyself a follower of the Lamb, and glory in the title? Learn then of him to be harmless and blameless, meek and lowly in heart, alike averse from doing or deserving evil, and ready to suffer it.

S E C T. IV.

BUT how does the Lamb of God take away sin? By bearing it in his own body on the tree. He was wounded for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him. O heavy load, which sunk the Son of God in his body to the grave; and, had it lain unremoved, would have sunk the world into ruins! Worthy is the Lamb that was

flain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

S E C T. V.

THIS is the body of Christ. This sacramental bread is intended to signify and represent the body of Christ, that was given for us, *as an offering and sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour; and broken for us*, as the bread in this sacrament is broken before it is distributed. His sacred flesh was torn and disfigured with the scourges, pierced and violated with the nails and the spear. The Lamb that was seen in the midst of the throne, had before been stretched on the cross; made a spectacle to God, to angels, and to men; highly approved and accepted of the first, adored by the second, mourned by some, derided and insulted over by others of the last. O my soul, in thy judgement of this crucified Jesus, take for thy guide the only wise God, and for thy pattern in thy behaviour towards him, saints and angels!

S E C T. VI.

DIDST thou, O Jesus, with whom the most precious things, and most excellent beings that can be named among creatures, are

not once to be compared; didst thou give thy sacred self for me on the cross? and art thou ready to give thyself to me in thy supper? I give, I consecrate myself, without the least reserve, to thee. I could wish I was more worthy of thy acceptance. But such as I have, and am, give I unto thee; and I give it heartily, as unto the Lord, to whom I confess myself to owe more than I can give. O do thou make me more like thyself, shed more of thy beauty and loveliness upon me, sanctify me in every part and power, help me to be more perfect in every divine attainment, that I may be less unworthy of thee! And, to the sacrifice of thy broken body, grant, O my Saviour, I may be able to join the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which thou wilt not despise! Thou diedst for me, to thee I will henceforth live!

S E C T. VII.

MY blessed Saviour did not suffer in his body only. No; it was the least part of his sufferings that was visible: his soul was sorrowful even unto death; and laboured under such an agony in the garden, that he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground; prayed, *Father, if possible,*

let this cup pass from me; and had an angel dispatched express to comfort him. Nay, he was heard crying out on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Strange language for the Son of God! Does God forsake his own Son? the holy, the merciful God, his innocent, his well-beloved Son? He does for a time, so as to suspend the usual irradiations of his countenance, and to leave him in the hands of his enemies to do unto him what they pleased. And when Jesus suffers and dies, shall a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? When he suffers to expiate the sins of others, shall I not be contented to suffer the pains and afflictions necessary for the cure of my own sinful affections, and the trial and improvement of my own virtues? Surely, if he laments his being forsaken, who was undoubtedly the Son of God, I have no just reason to question my being a child of God, or (supposing myself to be so) to think I am hardly dealt with, merely because destitute of those sensible consolations which I have sometimes enjoyed.

S E C T. VIII.

WAS there ever sorrow like that of my Saviour? Can any thing be imagined to exceed it? Yes, O my soul, though his

sorrows were inconceivably great, his love was greater: for his love made him willing to pass through such a sea of sorrows; his love brought him to that dark hour, and supported him in it; love to the rebellious sons of men; love to thee, O my soul! Hereupon I cannot forbear crying out, Was ever love like his love? And, reflecting on the unparalleled greatness both of his sorrow and his love, I further say to myself, Is there any evil like the evil of sin, the guilty, the cursed occasion of this dolorous scene? From whence I am unavoidably led to ask, What ingratitude, O my soul, can be equal to thine, if, after all that thy Redeemer hath done and suffered for thee, thou wilt not be persuaded to break thy league with his enemies, that is, with thy sins; Christ having no enemy but sin, or such as sin hath made enemies to him?

S E C T. IX.

WHY, O my soul, is this bread called *the communion of the body of Christ*, but at once to signify the object commemorated, a dying crucified Jesus, and the near relation among those who join in commemorating him; that because the bread is one, we also being many, are one body, forasmuch as we are all partakers of the one bread? Christians

conspiring in this sacred action, may justly be called *a communion*; since the bread is one of which they jointly partake, and the sacrifice one and the same represented by this bread. They are hereby taught, that all the disciples of Christ, how great soever their number be, (acknowledging this sacrifice, and putting their trust in it, which they declare by their united participation of that one bread, which is the memorial of it), constitute but one mystical body, or society, of which they are the members, and Christ Jesus is the head. O my soul, let thy most ardent wishes, thy most importunate prayers, thy most unwearied endeavours, be for the peace and unity of the Christian church; that all the faithful in Christ may be one, even as thou, Father, art in the Son, and the Son in thee, that they may be made perfect in one, and dwell and walk in love! And resolve, O my soul, that no prejudice, no provocation, shall ever alienate thy affections from any of those who are fellow-members of the same body with thee, and make thee forget what thou owest them, or rather what thou owest to thy Saviour; thy regard to whom thou canst not better express, than by thy zeal to promote the peace of his church, and welfare and happiness of all belonging to it!

S E C T. X.

COULD the Jews say, *Behold how he loved him*, seeing Jesus weep at the grave of Lazarus? and may I not with much more reason cry out,—Behold, how he loved us,—when I think of his shedding, not tears, but blood, his vital blood, for us? He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood. His condescending to wash his disciples feet, did not more plainly, or in a more affecting manner, discover his humility, than his washing us in his blood does his love. And for such love what is the most proper return but love? What other return can I make that will be accepted, if love be wanting? If I love him, he first loved me: his love was a love of compassion and benevolence, mine is a love of gratitude; mine is a debt, his free. If I love my fellow-christian, if I love all mankind, if I love my enemies, the honour is his to have shewed me the way; and having such a guide and pattern, it would be an indelible reproach upon me not to follow him.

S E C T. XI.

OBERVE, O my soul, the time when thy Lord gave his disciples the new com-

mandment of love; because, though only a circumstance, it is exceeding instructive and quickening! It seems to have been soon after he had been instituting his supper. And what more proper season for the delivery of this law, or stronger conviction of the reasonableness of it, than that afforded by this ordinance; in which the love of Jesus is seen rising, and spreading itself beyond all bounds, and triumphing over all opposition? If the commandment is new, in respect of the height to which the disciples of Christ are to carry their love, the example is still more new and uncommon by which it comes recommended. Should they be called to lay down their lives for the brethren, they would herein only love one another as he, their Lord and Master, had loved them. Nor can I regard it as such a hard saying, that I am to love my enemies, (which he also enjoins me); since, when we were enemies, Christ died for us, that he might reconcile us to God; and, when dying, prayed for his enemies, enemies whom nothing but his blood would satisfy, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* I will learn, O my Saviour, how to love of thee! Never was the world taught a more excellent lesson; never before had this lesson so excellent a teacher.

S E C T. XII.

THIS cup is the new testament, or covenant, in Christ's blood; the blood of the new covenant, which was shed for many for the remission of sins. First, this blood of atonement was shed for the remission of sins; then, after a short space intervening, the gospel, dispensation was more fully opened, the new covenant solemnly proclaimed, and repentance and remission of sins preached in the name of Christ among all nations. Besides the confirmation which the gospel, containing God's covenant of grace with mankind, receives from the blood or death of Christ, considered with all its circumstances; this blood, being the blood of a sacrifice appointed by God, and represented in the sacramental supper, is, as such, a sign or seal on God's part by which the covenant is solemnized, and our assurance of his designs of favour and mercy towards us rendered as compleat as we can reasonably wish it to be. Think well of this, O my soul, and never more harbour the least suspicion of the freeness, the abundance, or the extent of the divine mercy! The mercy of God is not less conspicuous in the covenant itself, and the manner of establishing it,

than his faithfulness is out of question in fulfilling it; only seek mercy in the way which the gospel hath marked out to thee, and doubt not but thou shalt find it. The death of Christ, and now his life, is thy security. Let the mercy of God encourage thy hopes, and his faithfulness and truth in keeping covenant, be a pattern to thine.

S E C T. XIII.

O Lord, I am not my own; I never was, never can, never desire to be so, and hope and promise never to act as if I was! Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds. Thine I am by creation, thine by purchase, thine by covenant. I confess, and triumph in the relation, and acknowledge all the duties resulting from it. I have sworn, and cannot repent, that I will keep thy righteous statutes; and I now joyfully repeat the solemn engagement. Here I am; Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Deal with me and mine as it seemeth good in thy sight; thy will, and not mine, shall be the rule of my desires and actions, and thy glory my supreme end. It is thine to command and dispose, mine to obey and submit. Thou hast bought me with a price, even with the precious blood of thine

own Son, of which this sacramental wine is a memorial. I therefore, as in gratitude bound, present my whole self, body and soul, to thee, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is my reasonable service, with a full purpose of heart to glorify thee with both. I consider this sacramental eating and drinking, not only as expressive of a very high privilege enjoyed by the worthy communicant, who is here treated with the condescending freedom of a domestic servant, a guest, a friend of God, and of Jesus; but as an obligation upon me to behave at all times as thy devoted covenant-servant in Christ. O Lord, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and prepare my heart unto thee!

When retired after receiving.

S E C T. I.

HAST thou not, O my soul, this day had thy dear Lord, evidently set forth as crucified before thy eyes; and, by commemorating his death in the holy supper, declared thyself a disciple of this crucified Jesus? And what is to be the temper of my mind?

and my future behaviour, that it may agree with the character of one who professes himself a disciple of such a Master? Ought I not to be crucified with Christ to the world, the pomps and vanities, the riches and pleasures of it? Yes, certainly. A disciple of Christ is not to be taken up with these things. Did the Master embrace a life of meanness and poverty, and voluntarily submit to a most painful and ignominious death? was he not more despised by the men of the world, than he despised the things of it, and shewed himself superior to its spirit, its wisdom, its maxims, and temptations? and shall the disciple eagerly covet these things, admire them, value himself upon them, and place his happiness in them? In all this would he shew himself mindful of his profession? or rather would he not shamefully forget it? Though I am not obliged to renounce the possession, or the moderate use of any worldly advantages that Providence hath put into my hand; yet I am all such love of them as would weaken and counteract the diviner affections, and much more that which is inconsistent with the prevalency of such affections. I am to be of such a temper with regard to these earthly things, as to be able readily to forego them; to enjoy without abusing them, and being elated

and corrupted by them; and to do all the good I can with them. Can I have such an object often in my view, as the Son of God covered with a cloud of affliction; a cross, and this Lord of glory nailed to it; and expiring upon it: and yet not have my affections at all deadened to the world? have the same high thoughts of it, and the same fond attachment to it as ever? O my soul, it is impossible the contemplation of a crucified Jesus must have other effects! It must, and I trust it hath. I look unto Jesus, and suddenly the glory of the world disappears; its charms fade, and all its treasures lose their imaginary value. Let those doat on the world, who never meditate on a crucified Saviour, never remember him at his table: this I have done, and found the happy influence of that example which my Redeemer hath set before me so strong, that I no longer follow the world, as a captive in chains the triumphal chariot of his conqueror. This, alas, I did as the other slaves of the world in the days of my vanity; but, thanks to my Saviour, am now a conqueror in my turn! His example sets me free; his death hath convinced me of my folly, and taught me other and sounder notions of things. Henceforth not those things which render me less like my Saviour, while

he was in the world, shall be the matter of my glorying; but those by which I become conformed to him; among others, my being victorious over the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; all which are not of the Father, but of the world, which passeth away, and the lusts thereof.

S E C T. II

I Will not think of pleading with my Saviour, as what must render me dear to him, —Have I not eaten and drank in thy presence, and honoured thy memory?—being sensible that I have no other answer to expect, if I am found among the workers of iniquity, than that terrible one, *Depart from me, I know you not.* He will not know me, because I knew him no better; will not think his name honoured by being taken up by such polluted lips; will be ashamed to own me for his, because so utterly unworthy of his approbation. The greater, my soul, thy honour in the near access thou art allowed to thy Redeemer, and the oftener thou professest thy subjection to him, by partaking of the memorials of his body and blood, the greater is thy obligation to obey him, and the greater will be thy guilt if thou dost not! All the rest

of my life is to correspond with this particular action, and to make good what I have virtually promised in it, though I should not have expressly promised it, as I have done, and intend to do again, if God give opportunity.

S E C T. III.

BEWARE, O my soul, how thou framest a decisive judgement of thy state and character, merely or chiefly from the manner in which the sensitive part of thy nature hath been affected at the holy table! Perhaps thy passions have been strongly moved, thou hast felt an unusual liveliness and flow of spirits; or, on the contrary, hast had a kind of dead weight upon thee, which hath bowed thee down to the earth; a more than ordinary confinement in thy thoughts, and languor in thy affections. Now, O my soul, in case the warmth of thy affections be followed with an answerable tenderness of conscience afterwards, happy art thou, and hast abundant reason to be easy and thankful: not so, if it be only a sudden gust of passion, which leaves thee as much under the power of sensual and worldly affections as ever; thy religion is vain, and thou art yet to

learn what are the first principles of practical Christianity! On the other hand, the reflection on the little fervour of the duties thou hast performed, if it hath been owing to thy own neglect, and too great indulgence to the animal life, much more if it hath proceeded from a habit of indevotion, ought to humble thee, and fill thee with an uneasy concern about thy present temper. But supposing it not to be chargeable on any such criminal causes, (as thou hast ground to believe it is not, when thou art unfeignedly desirous of doing better, and findest thy choice of that which is good, and the determination of thy will to it, more firm and entire, so as to be proof against the temptations that assault thee in thy Christian course), be not too severe in thy censure of thyself; inasmuch as God, who knoweth thy frame, will make gracious allowances for the weakness of it. The thing thou art principally to attend to, is thy habitual disposition, and ordinary conduct. Am I exact and regular in my common deportment, watchful over my thoughts, and careful that the general frame and posture of my spirit be agreeable to my Christian profession? Am I more circumspect to avoid temptation, and more resolved and successful in my conflict with

it? Is my conversation in heaven, and my great solicitude how I shall keep myself in the love of God? This being supposed, I am justified to conclude, that the great design of the Lord's supper, and every other gospel-institution, hath been answered; that I have communicated with profit, if I have not done it with so much life and pleasure as I could have wished; and may therefore go on my way rejoicing that God hath accepted me.

S E C T. IV.

HAST thou not, O my soul, this day while commemorating the love of thy Saviour, and exciting thy own by the remembrance of his, resolved to lead a more exemplary, devout, and useful life than thou hast hitherto, done? Such resolutions are perfectly just, and peculiarly agreeable to the ordinance of the supper, and I will suppose thine to have been sincere; yet, stop a moment, and consider those words of thy Saviour to his disciples, *The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* Even those who want not integrity of heart, are too often more forward to purpose and promise, than afterwards they are punctual in fulfilling their engagements. Their readiness to promise, shews the willing-

ness of the spirit; that they have a spirit within them which hath strong convictions of duty, and laudable dispositions to the practice of it; while their failure, in part, though not entirely, in the performance, is a melancholy proof of the weakness of the flesh. The Apostles of Christ are a most memorable example of this, who bravely resolved to stand by their Master at all hazards; protesting, that though they should die with him, yet would they not deny him. Glorious resolution! But how poorly kept to? for when it came to the trial, (to say nothing of the traitor Judas), all but one forsook him and fled; and he for his part did worse than forsake him, he denied him; and this soon after they had been celebrating the supper with their Master, and though they were zealously affected to him; as they had reason to be, having received a thousand marks of the most tender friendship from him, and three of them being more highly honoured than the rest with the sight of his transfiguration. And is this the end of all? From this I learn the kind and provident care of our divine Master in the counsel he gave his disciples, and the necessity of following it, *to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation.* I am not to trust to the duty I

have lately performed, nor to the devotion, though real, I have exercised in it; nay, nor to the grace which I may have reason to think hath been bestowed on me, as the reward of my unfeigned desire and endeavour to please God, unless I further add my own continued prayers and vigilance. As the mere outward action in the sacrament does not convey grace, but the spirit of God by it; nor is a qualification for receiving it, but the temper of mind, and right intention and probity of soul with which I communicate: so the influence which this sacrament hath in the after course of my life, to prepare me for the more ready discharge of other duties, and to preserve me in the hour of temptation, does not immediately and necessarily flow from the sacrament itself, but depends on my doing my part after the solemnity is over, as well as in the act of receiving; otherwise I shall have no cause to wonder, if I am worsted by temptations, and quickly lose my relish for the pleasures of devotion. Be sure then, O my soul, to fix this deep in thy remembrance, that neither the love of Christ to thee, nor thine to him, nor thy conversing with him at his table, however encouraging and delightful, will absolutely secure thee from temptation, (God, for wise reasons, permitting temptations of divers

kinds to befall us for the trial of our virtue and fidelity), or in it, without watchfulness and prayer! In prudence, then, take care, that both these accompany and follow all thy good purposes and dispositions, whether at the table of the Lord, or at any other time when thy affections are more than usually enlarged and stirred within thee; that so whatever temptations occur to draw thee off from thy duty, or to make thee less vigorous in it, being mindful of the vows of God that are upon thee, thou mayest be more than conqueror over them all.

S E C T. V.

THE cloud which hath guided thy meditations hitherto, has a bright as well as a dark side; it is a cloud of glory. For the present then change the scene, O my soul, from the humiliation of the Son of God, which thou hast been called to remember in his supper; turn thine eyes to his exalted state; from a dying to a risen Saviour; from his first coming in the form of a servant, to his second appearance in the form of God; when, being sat down on the throne of his glory, and all nations gathered before him, he shall separate them one from the other, as a shepherd

divideth the sheep from the goats, and absolve or condemn, reward or punish them, according as their works have been! Yet a little while, O my soul, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; and when he shall appear, they also that have waited for him, shall appear with him in glory, having their bodies raised from the grave, and made like unto his! With this prospect I will comfort myself, under all the infelicities of life, and apprehensions of death. I must die, pass through the dark valley, drink of the cold cup that my Saviour drank of; but if I belong to him as a living member of his mystical body, I shall rise again to a blessed immortality. It was not the design of his death to excuse his followers from dying, but, as connected with his resurrection, to save them from the terrors of that last enemy; forasmuch as death is now only a dark passage to the regions of immortal light and glory, and we lay down this body, with all its frailties and imperfections, to take it up again without them, bright, active, and incorruptible. Look forward, O my soul, to that glorious day! Think what a joyful, what a surprising meeting that will be, of perfected minds with their glorified bodies, of all the saints that have ever lived in the most distant regions and ages

of it with one another! Think of that divine and eternal festival in which they shall all join with one heart in the kingdom of their Father, and at which thou, O my soul, shalt be a transported guest! Now we necessarily meet in separate, and, alas, too often in divided and opposite communions; estranged and alienated in our affections, for want of knowing one another better; now they are but few with whom thou canst personally join in the common duties of divine worship, still fewer in the Lord's supper; thy many infirmities abate the pleasures of thy best performances, and the pleasure, as it is imperfect, so is transient too. Hereafter all the followers of the Lamb, all the faithful servants of God, a multitude without number, shall worship together in the temple above; unite their praises to God and the Lamb; mingle their affections, like so many confluent streams, in one common ocean of love; be delivered from every temptation, and from every grief; be made perfect in knowledge, holiness, and bliss, and so continue to everlasting ages. O what life and spirit should the meditation of this infuse into all my religious performances! How shouldst thou stretch all thy faculties, O my soul, and aim to do the will of God as the angels do in heaven, and as thou thyself

shalt do it when thou art come thither! Blessed time, when all upright minds shall see that wonderful person face to face, whom now they behold as through a glass darkly! Blessed time, when the presence of the Redeemer shall make all memorials of him needless! O most blessed time, the expectation of so many ages, when the church shall receive the immediate and fullest emanations of that love which she is now ravished with the contemplations of! Then shalt thou acknowledge, O my soul, that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither can enter into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath laid up for them that love him! Then shalt thou reap the fruits of thy Lord's victories, and thy own; of his victory over death, and of thy own through him, over sin and the world! Then, in fine, will it be true, in the highest sense the words are capable of, that *we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to God the judge of all.*

A P R A Y E R.

GREAT and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty;—what then art thou, whose power hath produced and sustains, whose wisdom both contrived and directs, and whose goodness crowns them all! I praise thee, O my God, from the bottom of my soul, that, having made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, thou hast, in the course of thy providence, so ordered the circumstances of my birth and education, that I should be a partaker of the grace of the gospel from my earliest years, and know the wonderful works of God, even those things which many prophets and kings desired to see and hear, and could not. For all my powers and faculties, as a reasonable creature, all the testimonies of thy paternal care, all the effects of thy common bounty and goodness, in the course of my life, I bless and magnify thy holy name; but more especially for thy distinguishing grace and mercy in Jesus Christ; in whom while I rejoice and glory, I cannot

forget to pray that all mankind may enjoy the same happiness, and the whole world know that thou hast so loved it, as to give thine only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Hear, O most gracious God, the prayers of thy faithful people for the enlargement of that kingdom of truth and righteousness which thou hast set up among men, that the religion of Christ may be professed and practised in its greatest simplicity. Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, their numbers continually increase, their consolations abound, the multitude of them that believe be of one heart and one soul, and the church of Christ appear to be the school where immortal souls are trained up for the more perfect worship, and the everlasting felicity of the heavenly world. O let not thy grace be received in vain by me! Let it not be in vain that I have been so fully taught the way of the Lord, have had both external and internal assistances, and every sort of encouragement, that I might abound in all the fruits of holiness, which are by Christ to the glory and praise of God. Forgive me, O merciful Father, that I have made thee returns so unsuitable to thy great goodness towards me, to the vast and numberless obligations thou hast laid

me under, and the repeated engagements I have taken upon myself! O forgive me the coldness of my love, my sloth and inactivity, the little proficiency I have made in the virtues of the Christian and divine life, with the advantage of so excellent a rule, so perfect an example, so free an access to the throne of grace, such almighty aids, and the prospect of so glorious a reward! And O may the consideration of thy readiness to pardon, fill me with an ingenuous hatred and detestation of all sin; and my abhorrence of sin, and care to avoid it, and all the occasions of and temptations to it for the future, be a satisfying proof, that all my sins are actually forgiven me through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ thy Son, whose death I have been shewing forth in his supper! And may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make me perfect to do his will, fulfilling in me the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power! Help me to carry in mind the design of one duty to dispose me for another, and of all the instrumental duties of religion to beget and strengthen those exalted principles and habits of goodness in my soul, by which it will be more and more ripened

for the life of heaven. By faith let me be able to see him who is invisible, and always to walk as in his presence, and be more affected and influenced by the contemplation of an absent Saviour, in every view of him. While I meditate on the blessed Jesus, enduring the contradiction of sinners, and humbling himself unto death, even the death of the cross, may I be instructed what to expect in the present life, and after what manner to behave under all the sufferings and afflictions of it: and may a risen and an exalted Redeemer elevate my heart above all the vanities of this transitory state of things, to that happy world, whither he, my Lord, and the forerunner of all the faithful, is gone; that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ; for whose sake let me be willing to suffer the loss of all things, not counting my life dear to me, so I may finish my course with joy. Give me, O Lord, to feel more of the mighty power of thy grace concurring with the gospel of thy Son, to mortify every inordinate desire, to confirm every good purpose, to purify and regulate my affections, and to change my whole soul more and more into a divine image and likeness? By that grace let me be

enabled to trample on all the temptations to sin, and to keep a conscience void of offence, both towards God, and towards man; that my love to thee may be superlative; and though not adequate to thy excellencies and thy benefits, which it can never be, may bear some proportion to my capacities; that my devotion may be unaffected and fervent, my resignation entire, and obedience chearful, uniform, and constant. To men let me be just and charitable, kindly affectioned, ready to do good and to communicate, as I have ability and opportunity, carrying it towards all with a mild, a peaceable and Christian spirit; while, as to myself, I am sober-minded, poor in spirit, and pure in heart; and though not free from all mental irregularities, am yet getting ground upon them daily; opposing my inclinations as often as they oppose my duty; deny myself, am temperate in all things, bridle my tongue, and labour to be an example of patience, meekness, contentment, and to come behind in no good thing; looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life; that so, when I shall have done the work which thou hast given me to do, and suffered all that thou sawest meet for the trial of my faith, and hope, and submission to thy will, I may finally inherit the promises which

thou hast made us in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Amen.

Rev. v. 13. *And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*

6 JY 53

T H E E N D.